# You and I

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# “YOU AND I”: DOES IT MEAN THE SAME ACROSS CULTURES?

## DYNAMICS OF COUPLE RELATIONSHIPS IN TURKEY AND THE NETHERLANDS

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# “You and I”: Does it mean the same across cultures?

## Dynamics of couple relationships in Turkey and the Netherlands

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# CONTENTS

# Chapter 1

## INTRODUCTION

Is love a need or a luxury? Is "romantic love" a perquisite to get married? Does everyone share these dynamics? These questions do not have a single answer. Your reply may depend on many things such as your personality, gender, but also on your country, culture, or ethnicity. Couple relationships have commonly been studied by different perspectives in psychology (Goodwin, 1999). In its broadest terms, interdependency and psychological sharing characterize couple relationships that include physical and emotional bonding between the members of the dyad. Intimate couple relationships are important in the sense that they increase couples' range of both positive and negative emotional experiences, influence couples' physical health, and also affect the well-being of couples as well as their children (Bradbury & Karney, 2010; Miller & Perlman, 2008).

**Main Theoretical Perspectives on Couple Relationships**

In evolutionary theory, there are two key concepts: natural selection and sexual selection, which can be linked to survival and reproduction. More specifically, it has been argued that males and females differ on mate preferences and sexual behavior. Mates' resources and strength are more crucial for females whereas for males it is fertility and fidelity. It has been argued that evolutionary theory provides useful explanations in psychology by focusing on both adaptive functions and biological forces. However, other factors, such as personality traits and attitudes, influencing the behavior have been underestimated (for more details on the theory; Buss, 1995; 2009; Wood & Eagly, 2002).

Another perspective to study couple relationships is attachment theory. It has been argued that there is a need to form affectional bonds between infants and their caregivers in order to survive. Attachment has three main aspects; proximity maintenance, safe haven, and secure base. It is argued that attachment is an emotional bond between the child and caregiver(s) and if this bond is threatened it yields to anxiety (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). A latter development of the theory, with a vast growing empirical corpus supporting it, has shown that the relationship between couple partners may be understood in terms of attachment too, both partners being equally serving as providers of the secure base (for a review, see Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Attachment dimensions in adulthood are related to the "fear of abandonment" (anxiety) and "discomfort with closeness" (avoidance) and have their roots in internal working models of the self and other (Bartholomew, & Horowitz, 1991; Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998; Collins, 1996; Griffin, & Bartholomew, 1994). Attachment theory argues that past relationships have an influence on present ones and focuses on cognitive-affective schemes to understand dyadic relationships; yet, the theory does not take into account the possibility of different relational outcomes or processes couples with similar attachment dimensions go through or experience.

A final prominent perspective is social exchange theory in which the main goal of an individual is to maximize the rewards and minimize the costs in the relationship that can be

accomplished through the exchange of various couple-related aspects (Rusbult & Van Lange, 1995; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Social exchange theory focuses on the present and different aspects of the relationships including satisfaction, stability, and investments (Rusbult & Van Lange, 1995). Even though the theory concentrates on the exchange between the partners involved in intimate relationships, it has been argued that it fails to address the change in partners' perceptions.

What is common in these three widely used perspectives in the field is that none of them addresses cultural aspects in close relationships adequately. All the dyadic interactions and dynamics in couple relationships do not just happen in the dyadic context but happen in a cultural context too. That omission is the starting point of the current thesis in which dyadic relationships are examined from a broader and an ample perspective. Here a different perspective is undertaken to examine couple relationship from a cultural approach. In other words, do different characteristics of couple relationships exist in different ethnic or cultural groups? Do these characteristics relate to each other similarly across different groups?, and do different ethnic or cultural groups differ on relationship satisfaction? Covering the mentioned gap by addressing these questions is the initial point of this thesis.

**The Role of Culture and Cross-Cultural Psychology in Close Relationships**

Before moving to the role of culture in close relationships, I think it is crucial to describe cross-cultural psychology and the reasons behind studying couple relationships across different cultural/ethnic groups. Cross-cultural psychology is defined as "the study of similarities and differences in individual psychological functioning in various cultural and ethnocultural groups; of ongoing changes in variables reflecting such functioning; and of the relationships of psychological variables with sociocultural, ecological, and biological variables" (Berry, Poortinga, Breugelmans, Chasiotis, & Sam, 2011, p. 5). Thus, the main goal of cross-cultural psychology is, in its broader terms, identifying differences as well as similarities across different cultural and ethnic groups but also examining how we can learn from these differences and similarities (e.g., if research conducted in a Western setting cannot be replicated in a non-Western setting, these differences across groups lead us to question the validity and generalizability of our results).

There are three perspectives on cultural differences in cross-cultural psychology, which have a bearing on my work. First, absolutism argues that individual psychological functioning is the same everywhere. For instance, from an absolutist point of view, the value of honor means the same across different cultural groups. Second, from a relativist point of view, individual psychological functioning is entirely shaped by and tied to the culture; cross-cultural experiences cannot be compared because of their inseparable link with the context. Finally, from a universalist point of view, the focus is on both examining the universals —similarities— and culture-specifics —differences— (Berry et al., 2011). From a universalist

point of view, psychological phenomena have both general and specific aspects. Here it is fundamental to emphasize that differences among groups are not viewed as "bad" or similarities are not considered as "good" (or vice versa).

**The role of culture.** In this dissertation, the role of culture in relation to couple relationships is examined from a universalist point of view. In other words, it is believed that there are certain universal patterns and dynamics when we talk about marriages or couple relationships but there are also certain culture-specifics. For instance, it is argued that nuclear family structures and functioning may be quite similar across groups; however, the function of extended family may differ among these groups. Previous research has shown that forming and developing intimate relationships are quite similar across cultures; however, why and how we form and develop intimate relationships vary across cultures. For instance, Chinese and Indonesian individuals were found to prefer chastity more than Swedish, Norwegian, or Dutch individuals (Buss et al., 1990). Additionally, physical attractiveness and outgoing personality were more important mate characteristics for Americans than for Indians (Sprecher & Chandak, 1992). Furthermore, partner preferences may vary across marriage arrangements; Asian Indians involved in family-initiated marriages named the importance of finance and shared values more than American couples involved in couple-initiated marriages (Madathil & Benshoff, 2008).

The differences in diverse dynamics regarding the couple relationships have been associated with cultural value dimensions. More specifically, the individualism-collectivism dimension has commonly been used in relation to cross-cultural similarities and differences in couple relationships (Triandis, 1995). Individualism-collectivism refers to the extent a culture motivates the needs and values of "an autonomous and unique self" instead of a group (Matsumoto, Weissman, Preston, Brown, & Kupperbusch, 1997). In other words, individual goals and interests are more vital in individualistic cultures whereas in-group cohesion, harmony, goals, and interests of the in-group are more prominent in collectivistic cultures (Hofstede, 1991). Various social, political, and economical factors, such as affluence, modernization, and industrialization, have been found to relate to individualism and collectivism (Georgas, Berry, van de Vijver, Kagitcibasi, & Poortinga, 2006).

Close relationships in more individualistic and affluent Western cultures are the basis of a nuclear family structure and function (Georgas et al., 2006). Needs and desires of the couple *per se* are vital in these relationships. Emotional sharing, mutuality, companionship, egalitarianism can be named as dynamics that mostly dominate close relationships in Western settings. In more collectivistic, less affluent non-Western cultures, extended family function co-exists with the nuclear family structure (Georgas et al., 2006). In other words, needs and desires of the in-group (extended family, kin) may be as vital as the needs and desires of the couple and the nuclear family. Harmony, cohesion, and patriarchy are more

salient in non-Western couple relationships (Lucas et al., 2008). For instance, in Chinese traditions (a relatively collectivistic culture) a bronze mirror and shoes are given from bride's family to the groom as a wedding dowry; pronunciation of bronze in Chinese is same as "together" and pronunciation of shoes in Chinese is same as "harmony" which reflects the more collectivistic characteristics of the culture. This thesis aims to disentangle the role of culture in relation to different couple dynamics among groups with supposedly distinct cultural value orientations.

**The Role of Psychological Acculturation**

Psychological acculturation refers to psychological processes after migration. In the present dissertation, it is argued that the role of psychological acculturation needs to be addressed in addition to the role of culture as societies have become increasingly ethnically heterogeneous due to economical, political, and sociocultural reasons. In other words, contact with other groups has different consequences both on the individual and group level (Arends-Toth & van de Vijver, 2003; Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006; Celenk & van de Vijver, 2011). Psychological acculturation is considered as a process with different aspects, namely conditions, orientations, and outcomes. Acculturation conditions are antecedents and these include the characteristics of the receiving society (e.g., perceived or objective discrimination; Verkuyten, 1998), characteristics of the society of origin (e.g., sociopolitical context), and characteristics of the immigrant group (e.g., ethnic vitality). The mediating factor acculturation orientations are mainly attitudes and preferences regarding the way immigrants want to deal with the ethnic and mainstream culture[1]. The sense of belonging to the mainstream culture (mainstream identity) and to the ethnic culture (ethnic identity) as well as preference for maintaining the ethnic culture (cultural maintenance) and adopting the mainstream culture (cultural adoption) are various orientations which can be named in relation to psychological acculturation. A final aspect to consider is behavioral outcomes which include both sociocultural and psychological consequences of acculturation. Psychological outcomes may be related to well-being and satisfaction, whereas sociocultural outcomes can be both competence in the ethnic culture as well as competence in the mainstream culture (Arends-Toth & van de Vijver, 2003; Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001; Ward & Kennedy, 1994).

While referring to psychological acculturation, there are two additional points to underline. Firstly, proponents of a bidimensional point of view, widely endorsed nowadays in cross-cultural psychology, have argued that different acculturation orientations and outcomes co-

1 In the acculturation literature, ethnic culture, heritage culture/country, and culture/country of origin are used interchangeably. Moreover, mainstream culture, destination culture/country, host culture/country, the culture/country of destination, and the dominant or majority culture are used interchangeably.

exist which means that an immigrant may prefer to maintain his/her ethnic culture and prefer to adopt the mainstream culture as well. In short, instead of a full transition from ethnic to mainstream culture (unidimensional point of view), integration (biculturalism; Benet-Martinez, 2012) amounts to both maintenance and adoption. The second point involves domain specificity. The process of psychological acculturation depends on the domain (private and public). For instance, it has been found that there is a preference of cultural maintenance in private domain and of integration in the public domain among Turkish-Dutch immigrants (Arends-Toth & van de Vijver, 2003). Another goal of the thesis is to examine the role of psychological acculturation in relation to couple dynamics.

**Immigration history in the Netherlands.** Immigration history in the Netherlands goes back to the 1950s. There have been three immigration waves; former Dutch colonies from Suriname (since 1965), Antilles (since 1965), and Indonesia (since mid-1950s) have constituted the first wave. Second wave was mainly related to employment; workers mostly for unskilled and low-skilled jobs migrated from Southern Europe, Turkey, and Morocco to the Netherlands during the mid-1950s and 1960s, respectively. The third wave included political and religious refugees from Eastern Bloc countries, such as Hungary, and refugees from other countries, such as former Yugoslavia (since the 1970s and mid-1980s, respectively; Vermeulen & Penninx, 2000).

Examining different aspects of acculturation and their association with close relationships are important as couples may use each other to deal with acculturative stress or acculturative stress may trigger unhappiness among couples. In other words, it is claimed that:

> a spouse's marital quality should change as a function of his or her accumulated experiences with and reactions to behavioral exchanges in the marriage and that judgments of marital quality will affect how spouses contend with and resolve arious difficulties and transitions… the behaviors that spouses exchange are likely to be determined in part by the stressors and difficulties that they confront and because the nature of how couples respond and adapt to these events can exacerbate or alleviate them (Karney & Bradbury, 1995, p. 23).

In addition to these aspects of acculturation, couples with an immigration background may prefer to maintain their ethnic culture, or they may prefer to adopt the mainstream culture, or they may co-exist. Therefore, couples with immigration background may be similar to or different from the mainstream couples which needs further elaboration in order to disentangle the role of acculturation dynamics in multicultural societies such as the Netherlands.

**Overview of the Dissertation**

The present dissertation has two main objectives.

(1) It aims to create an integrative model that examines the relationships between various couple-related dynamics among couples in Turkey and the Netherlands to disentangle the role of culture/ethnicity in couple relationships.

(2) It aims to establish the role of acculturation-related variables (e.g., acculturation orientations) in close relationships among ethnic groups in the Netherlands.

To summarize, the main contribution of this project lies in the combination of the role of culture (i.e., including Turkish and Dutch individuals) and the role of acculturation (i.e., including Turkish-Dutch, Surinamese-Dutch, Antillean-Dutch, Moroccan-Dutch, Indonesian-Dutch, and other Western and non-Western immigrant individuals) while studying various aspects of couple relationships both on the attitudinal and behavioral level (by concentrating on cross-country and cross-cultural/ethnic comparisons; see Table 1.1 for details of the couple-related and acculturation-related variables as well as of the cultural/ethnic groups included in the thesis). Furthermore, methodologically this project uses various strategies and analyses such as dyadic and longitudinal data as well as actor-partner interdependence model and latent growth curve modeling, which is believed to broaden our understanding on the topic.

The empirical part of this dissertation includes five separate chapters which describe five independent empirical studies trying to address different research questions (see Table 1.1).

The main goals are to examine:

(1) To what extent are couples in Turkey and the Netherlands similar to and different from each other regarding couple-related variables? (Chapter 2, 3).

(2) To what extent are couples in ethnic groups in the Netherlands similar to and different from each other regarding couple-related variables? (Chapter 4, 5, and 6).

(3) What is the role of acculturation in understanding these similarities and differences among couples in Turkey and the Netherlands? (Chapter 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6).

(4) To what extent do acculturation-related variables and couple-related variables relate to each other in Turkey and the Netherlands? (Chapter 3, 4, and 6).

(5) To what extent do dyadic differences/similarities relate to ethnic group differences/similarities on various couple-related variables among couples in Turkey and the Netherlands? (Chapter 2 and 3)

(6) To what extent do we establish cross-cultural differences and similarities of fluctuations in partner behaviors across ethnic groups in the Netherlands? (Chapter 5)

(7) What is the relationship between the occurrence and evaluation of partner behaviors and satisfaction among ethnic groups in the Netherlands? (Chapter 5)

**Table 1.1** Summary of variables and groups

| Variables included in the dissertation | | Ethnic/Cultural groups included in the dissertation |
|---|---|---|
| **Couple-related** | **Acculturation-related** | |
| Determinants of marital (dis)satisfaction<br>Positive and negative characteristics of the relationship<br>Sources of conflict<br>Roles<br>Communication<br>Partner values<br>Partner beliefs<br>Partner attitudes<br>Perceived positive and negative partner behavior<br>Happiness with relationship aspects<br>Relationship satisfaction<br>Life satisfaction<br>Destructive conflict resolution | Perceived discrimination<br>Ethnic and mainstream identity<br>Cultural maintenance and adoption<br>Psychological outcomes (well-being)<br>Sociocultural competence in ethnic and mainstream culture | Turkish (participants living in Turkey)<br>Dutch mainstream (non-immigrant, ethnic Dutch)[a]<br>Turkish-Dutch immigrant (participants with Turkish origin)[a]<br>Surinamese-Dutch immigrant (participants with Surinamese origin)[a]<br>Antillean-Dutch immigrant (participants with Antillean origin)[a]<br>Moroccan-Dutch immigrant (participants with Moroccan origin)[a]<br>Indonesian-Dutch immigrant (participants with Indonesian origin)[a]<br>Other Western immigrant (participants with a Western origin other than Indonesian and South African)[a]<br>Other non-Western immigrant (participants with a non-Western origin other than Turkish, Moroccan, Antillean, and Surinamese)[a] |

**Note.** [a] Living in the Netherlands

While focusing on each chapter separately, *Chapter 2* concentrates on the perceived antecedents of marital satisfaction and addresses similarities and differences in these antecedents among Turkish and Dutch couples. It is a qualitative study in which different aspects of couple relationships are examined through interviews that were conducted among Turkish, Dutch mainstream (non-immigrant), and Turkish-Dutch immigrant married dyads. In other words, this chapter addresses the role of culture and acculturation in relation to numerous marriage-related dynamics, such as determinants of satisfaction, roles, communication, and conflict. *Chapter 3* adds on *Chapter 2* in the sense that perceived antecedents of marital satisfaction are combined with the antecedents of marital

dissatisfaction and their relation to acculturation-related aspects are also examined. In other words, in *Chapter 3*, cross-cultural validity of a dyadic model is tested, in which marital satisfaction is predicted by various evaluations of the Turkish, Dutch, and Turkish-Dutch immigrant couples. In this chapter, I also empirically assess acculturation orientations and outcomes and their relationships with marriage-related dynamics.

In the remaining three chapters, more specifically *Chapter 4, 5,* and *6,* the main interest is to identify different patterns in couple relationships among mainstream Dutch and people with an immigration background living in the Netherlands. In *Chapter 4* acculturation-related (perceived discrimination, ethnic, and mainstream identity) and relationship-related aspects (spousal normative beliefs, attitudes, marital, and life satisfaction) are examined by using distal to proximal models. *Chapter 5* is a diary study in which participants were asked to complete diaries on the occurrence of their partners' positive and negative behaviors and how they evaluate these behaviors for 28 days and how these two relate to relationship and life satisfaction. *Chapter 6* deals with similarities and differences in destructive conflict resolution and satisfaction in couple relationships and associations between them as well as the link with acculturation orientations. In *Chapter 7*, a summary of the findings of the above mentioned five empirical studies is discussed with a particular emphasis on implications and suggestions.

# Chapter 2

# PERCEIVED ANTECEDENTS OF MARITAL SATISFACTION AMONG TURKISH, TURKISH-DUTCH, AND DUTCH COUPLES

This chapter is based on Celenk, O., & van de Vijver, F. J. R. (2013a). Perceived antecedents of marital satisfaction among Turkish, Turkish-Dutch, and Dutch couples. (in press, *International Journal of Psychology*). doi:10.1080/00207594.2012.741242

The present chapter investigates the cross-cultural differences and similarities in conceptualizations and perceived antecedents of marital satisfaction. We address ethnic group differences and similarities in marital satisfaction by comparing Turkish and Dutch dyads as well as the relationship of marital satisfaction with acculturation by comparing Turkish-Dutch (Turkish immigrant couples living in the Netherlands) dyads with both Dutch (mainstream couples living in the Netherlands) and Turkish (mainstream couples living in Turkey) dyads[1].

We include a non-Western sample to address marital satisfaction perceived by couples involved in other types of marriages (i.e., arranged or consanguineous marriages) than commonly examined in Western studies. Furthermore, we address the infrequently studied role of acculturation in marital dynamics by comparing an acculturating group (Turkish-Dutch immigrant couples) to groups from both the country of origin (Turkish mainstream couples) and settlement (Dutch mainstream couples). Finally, by conducting exploratory interviews we tap into the discourse used in the three groups to describe marital relationships.

**Marital Satisfaction and Culture**

The differences in various aspects related to couple relationships, structure of families (nuclear and extended forms), and functioning (emotional distance, social interaction, and communication) have been related to individualism-collectivism (Triandis, 1995). According to Triandis, individualism is characterized by goals that are mostly related to personal identity of individuals, personal attributes, and dispositions that are vital in behavior. Collectivism gives priority to the needs, beliefs, feelings, and values of the in-group and there is prevalence of harmony, cohesion, and loyalty to the in-group. Individualism-collectivism is related to various other features of societies, such as affluence, modernization, industrialization, and urbanization (Georgas, Berry, van de Vijver, Kagitcibasi, & Poortinga, 2006).

Marital satisfaction is the "evaluation of which positive features of marriage are salient and which negative features are relatively absent"; it involves a spouse's overall happiness with his/her marriage (Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000, p. 973; Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998). Scholars have identified cross-cultural differences in various marriage-related aspects, such as mate preferences (Hatfield & Sprecher, 1995), importance of love for and during marriage (Levine, Sato, Hashimoto, & Verma, 1995), importance of marital factors on marital satisfaction (Madathil & Benshoff, 2008), meaning of marital quality (Xu, 1996), romanticism attitudes and mate preferences (Medora, Larson, Hortacsu, & Dave, 2002), experiences of falling in love (Riela, Rodriguez, Aron, Xu, & Acevedo, 2010), and experience of marital satisfaction (Wong & Goodwin, 2009).

1 Turkish mainstream couples were dyads living in Turkey, Dutch mainstream couples were non-immigrant couples living in the Netherlands, and Turkish-Dutch immigrant couples were couples with a Turkish origin living in the Netherlands.

In Western cultures, marriage accommodates more personal and psychological needs than instrumental needs; marital satisfaction is mostly reached through the fulfillment of spouses' hedonistic goals (Lucas et al., 2008). This emphasis is in line with the prevailing individualism in Western cultures. The opposite pattern can be found in non-Western, more collectivistic cultures where strong in-groups exist, the extended family is highly valued, and spousal emotional sharing and intimacy are less important than individualistic cultures (Triandis, 1995). Georgas et al. (2006) argued that in more individualistic, more affluent, Western countries like the Netherlands, the economical role of the parents and of the extended family are less salient. Furthermore, less communication and social interaction, such as fewer visits and telephone contacts with kin, are found in more affluent countries compared to more collectivistic, less affluent, non-Western countries like Turkey (related to Research Question 1, denoted by *RQ1*).

Spouses in non-Western cultures were found to be less expressive and indirect as opposed to their Western counterparts who were more expressive and direct (Gudykunst & Matsumoto, 1996; *RQ2*). Furthermore, marital conflict can be expressed in very subtle ways in collectivistic cultures where such a conflict can be seen as a threat to in-group cohesion (Ting-Toomey et al., 1991; *RQ3*). People from collectivistic cultures tend to prefer more indirect forms of conflict management (e.g., third party mediation, avoiding, and withdrawing), whereas people from individualistic cultures tend to prefer more direct forms (e.g., dominating and forcing; Ting-Toomey et al., 1991; *RQ4*). Additionally, in non-Western cultures, there is a less equalitarian division of spousal roles; males are more dominant and there is a central role of females in childrearing and domestic household chores unlike Western cultures in which there is an emphasis on equalitarianism (Walter, 2003; *RQ5*).

**Marriages and antecedents of marital satisfaction in Turkey.** About half of the marriages in Turkey are arranged by the partners' parents; yet, love marriages are increasing, though they usually show high levels of interference by and involvement of the families (Hortacsu, 1999).

Interpersonal relationships and strong family ties with the nuclear as well as the extended family are important in the Turkish culture (Imamoglu & Yasak, 1997). Hortacsu (1997) found that family-initiated couples rated pragmatic aspects as more important and relationship-related aspects as less important compared to couples involved in relationships initiated by themselves. Also, they reported less emotional involvement and reciprocity than couples in couple-initiated relationships. Greater involvement of females regarding the decisions on domestic tasks was obtained among family-initiated marriages as opposed to couple-initiated marriages (Hortacsu, 1999). Furthermore, motivations for family-initiated marriages are related more to external reasons than the relationship *per se*; fewer spousal interactions and lower levels of reciprocal disclosure are found in family-initiated than in

couple-initiated marriages; there is more emphasis on reciprocity, mutuality, and spousal sharing in family-initiated marriages (Hortacsu & Oral, 1994). Fisiloglu (2001) indicated that couples involved in consanguineous marriages are lower on marital adjustment and they have more conflicts with the extended family compared to couples in nonconsanguineous marriages. Furthermore, problem solving patterns as well as constructive communication skills are found to be positively related to marital satisfaction (Hunler & Gencoz, 2003). Across all types of Turkish marriages, relationships with in-laws and socioeconomic level positively predict marital satisfaction (Imamoglu & Yasak, 1997). Furthermore, when women have dated their spouse prior to marriage, they report more marital satisfaction (Erci & Ergin, 2005). More recent studies have also examined different aspects of marriages and marital dynamics in Turkey (e.g., Guney, 2011; Ozmen & Atik, 2010).

**Marriages and antecedents of marital satisfaction in the Netherlands.** Families in the Netherlands are mainly nuclear (father, mother, and children). Core family values are tolerance, personal freedom of choice in relationships, and equality (Wouters, 1990). Georgas et al. (2006) found that Dutch families have relatively few contacts with their extended family.

Marriage partner selection in the Netherlands is based on partners' decisions and the attraction between the couples (Madathil & Benshoff, 2008). Cohabitation precedes marriage for 90% of the young population (Cuyvers, 2006). In the Netherlands, the traditional meaning of familialism, which can be defined as attaching a high value to being married and having a happy family life, has lost much of its nature (van den Troost, 2005). Studies on marital satisfaction showed that a less traditional sex role attitude by husbands is positively related to their wives' marital satisfaction. For husbands, the more both spouses emphasize the salience of being married or living with one's family, the greater their marital satisfaction was (van den Troost, 2005). The main reason for marital dissatisfaction was an unequal division of household labor for wives. While solving marital conflicts, husbands have a tendency to avoid and soothe as reported both by themselves and their wives, whereas wives have a tendency to engage in conflict, aggression-pushing, and problem-solving as reported by themselves (Buunk, Schaap, & Prevoo, 1990; Kluwer, Heesink, & Van de Vliert, 1996).

**Marital dynamics in an acculturation context.** The Turkish immigrant group is the largest non-Western immigrant group in the Netherlands (about 3% of the total population). The number of first- and second-generation Turkish immigrants is almost equal (Statistics Netherlands, 2011). The immigration history of the Turkish-Dutch group started in the 1960s when they came as so-called "guest workers". They usually came from rural parts of Turkey, especially after the 1970s. Low educational and socioeconomic levels were relatively

common among the immigrants. As of the 1970s and more prominent since the 1980s, the main reason for Turkish immigrants to migrate was marriage (Crul & Schneider, 2009). Endogamy (marrying within the own group) is common among Turkish immigrants (van Tubergen & Maas, 2007). Furthermore, compared to Dutch mainstreamers, Turkish-Dutch marry at a young age; 25% of Turkish second-generation females are already married at the age of 21 (Alders, Harmsen, & Hooghiemstra, 2001).

Migration from a more collectivistic, less affluent country (Turkey) to a more individualistic and more affluent country (the Netherlands) is believed to affect both marital and family dynamics. As spousal and family values and beliefs are only slowly affected by acculturation; which refers to psychological processes after migration and it involves both the immigrant group and the mainstream group (Arends-Toth & van de Vijver, 2008); Turkish-Dutch couples are thought to maintain their heritage culture values regarding marriages and to be more similar to Turkish couples than Dutch couples in marriage-related aspects (*RQ6*).

**The Present Study**

Our main research question was: To what extent do dyadic differences interact with ethnic group differences on perceived antecedents of marital satisfaction? Additionally, we formulated research questions about ethnic group differences:

*RQ1:* To what extent do Turkish, Turkish-Dutch, and Dutch couples differ on their evaluation of their own marriage and marriages in general (both as sources of positive and negative characteristics and marital satisfaction and dissatisfaction)?

*RQ2:* To what extent do Turkish, Turkish-Dutch, and Dutch couples differ on spousal communication?

*RQ3:* To what extent do Turkish, Turkish-Dutch, and Dutch couples differ on spousal conflict?

*RQ4:* To what extent do Turkish, Turkish-Dutch, and Dutch couples differ on spousal conflict resolution strategies?

*RQ5:* To what extent do Turkish, Turkish-Dutch, and Dutch couples differ on marital roles?

Finally, we were interested in the role of acculturative change in marriages:

*RQ6:* Are Turkish-Dutch marriages more similar to Dutch or to Turkish marriages?

## METHOD

### Participants

Participants were 49 married Turkish (*N* = 13), Dutch (*N* = 17), and Turkish-Dutch (*N* = 19) couples. There were no intercultural couples. Snowball sampling was used in which participants were mainly recruited through personal communication and they were asked to suggest an acquaintance. The Turkish-Dutch group comprises individuals who were born or whose parents were born in Turkey and migrated to the Netherlands. The majority of the Turkish-Dutch males (74%) and females (84%) were first-generation immigrants (participants and their parents were born in Turkey and participants moved to the Netherlands after the age of six years; Arends-Toth & van de Vijver, 2008). All couples were married by law and agreed to voluntarily participate in the study.

Groups did not differ on age, length of marriage, gross family income, education, employment, and number of children (see Table 2.1). Differences between cultural groups on marriage arrangements were significant, $\chi^2(12, N = 98) = 113.77$, $p < .001$. Turkish couples identified their marriage as initiated by friends (46%) or family (39%; both were identified as some type of arrangement without prior dating or only with few dates with the presence of another family member and high involvement of the family), whereas all of the Dutch couples identified their marriage as love marriage with prior dating. Additionally, Turkish-Dutch couples defined their marriage as either arranged through family (47%) or consanguineous (26%; both were initiated by the families and formed without prior dating or only with few dates with the presence of another family member and high involvement of the family).

### Materials

Semistructured interviews were conducted in which each participant was first asked demographic questions including age, length of marriage, gross family income, education, number of children, employment, place of birth, marriage arrangement, and reasons for migration (all demographic questions were asked in the same order).

Then they were asked a core set of questions mainly about their marriages such as “What are important features of your marriage?”, “How would you describe a happy, satisfying marriage?”, “Could you briefly describe an event such as a problem you had with your children and with your spouse recently?” and “How would you describe your role as a wife (husband) and mother (father)? How is the division of roles? If you had a chance to change the division, what would you like to change?”.

**Table 2.1** Sample Descriptives per Ethnic Group and Gender

| | Turkish | | Turkish-Dutch | | Dutch | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Background | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male |
| Mean age (years) | 43.1 | 50.1 | 38.6 | 40.7 | 45.3 | 46.8 |
| Mean length of marriage (years) | 16.5 | 16.5 | 17.8 | 17.8 | 21.3 | 21.3 |
| Mean gross family income (Euro) | 1642 | 1954 | 2650 | 2275 | 2523 | 3785 |
| Mean Education (years) | 8.1 | 9.8 | 10.5 | 11.2 | 13.6 | 13.3 |
| Mean number of children | 1.7 | 1.7 | 1.8 | 1.8 | 1.9 | 1.9 |
| Employment[a] | | | | | | |
| Housewife/Retired | 61.5 | 23.1 | 26.3 | 5.3 | 5.9 | 0 |
| Working without high education | 7.7 | 23.1 | 36.8 | 63.1 | 47.1 | 41.1 |
| Working with high education | 15.4 | 0 | 26.4 | 21.1 | 35.3 | 47.1 |
| Self-employed | 15.4 | 53.8 | 10.5 | 10.5 | 11.7 | 11.8 |
| Marriage arrangement[a] | | | | | | |
| Arranged marriage | 38.5 | 38.5 | 47.3 | 47.3 | 0 | 0 |
| Consanguineous | 0 | 0 | 26.3 | 26.3 | 0 | 0 |
| Arranged through relatives | 7.7 | 7.7 | 5.3 | 5.3 | 0 | 0 |
| Arranged through friends | 46.2 | 46.2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Love-dating (couple-initiated) | 7.6 | 7.6 | 21.1 | 21.1 | 100 | 100 |
| Reason for migration[a] | | | | | | |
| Family formation | | | 31.6 | 47.4 | | |
| Employment | | | 15.8 | 26.3 | | |
| Family reunion | | | 52.6 | 26.3 | | |
| *N* | 13 | 13 | 19 | 19 | 17 | 17 |

**Note.** [a]Percentages

### Procedure

Interviews were conducted individually and simultaneously by two interviewers in separate locations in families' houses. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. Interviews were conducted in the native language of the participant: Turkish interviewers conducted interviews with Turkish and Turkish-Dutch couples and Dutch interviewers conducted interviews with Dutch couples. Interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participant.

**Data analysis.** After interviews were completed, verbatim transcripts were prepared in the original language, which were translated to English by bilingual trained research assistants: Dutch assistants were fluent in Dutch and English and Turkish assistants were fluent in Turkish and English. A coding scheme was developed by the authors based on the topics covered in the interviews (see Table 2.2). Positive and negative characteristics of marriages referred to various aspects indicated by the participants particularly about their own marriage, determinants of marital (dis)satisfaction referred to different aspects related to

marriages in general identified by the participants. Communication between the spouses primarily involved shared activities and emotional and psychological sharing. Reasons for marital problems and ways to solve marital problems referred to marital conflict and conflict management strategies. Finally, marital roles referred to the division of labor within the household. We had a total of eight marriage-related domains.

Each interview was analyzed based on the coding scheme; an utterance related to a particular domain was coded under that domain. For instance, if a participant indicated "Love, mutual respect, trust, providing financial sources, happiness" as determinants of marital satisfaction, we copied that relevant utterance under the determinants of marital satisfaction domain. All transcripts were coded individually by the first author and two trained research assistants who were involved from the beginning of the study. The coding process aimed at obtaining themes (derived from the general domains) that were on the one hand internally homogenous and on the other hand different from each other. In order to check interrater reliability, approximately half of the randomly selected interviews from each group were individually rated by the first author and two research assistants to assess the level of agreement between the coders. The percentages of agreement between the raters were 95%, 79%, and 93% for Turkish-Dutch, Dutch, and Turkish groups, respectively. We coded a total of 790 utterances related to eight domains and 39 themes related to these marriage-related domains. It is important to note that in the qualitative analysis, our sample comprised 98 individuals, whereas in the quantitative analysis we worked with a total sample size of 790 utterances.

## RESULTS

Separate multivariate repeated measure analyses of variance were conducted for positive aspects, negative aspects, determinants of marital satisfaction, determinants of marital dissatisfaction, communication between spouses, reasons for marital arguments, ways to solve marital arguments, and marital roles domains. Dyad (two levels: wife vs. husband part of the couple) was the within-subject variable and ethnic group (three levels: Turkish, Turkish-Dutch, and Dutch) was the between-subject variable. Proportions of husbands' and wives' responses pertaining to a certain theme were the dependent variables. For instance, for positive characteristics of marriage domain, we had five themes, so we had five dependent measures, and we had dyad with two levels. Therefore, we had a two-factorial within-subject design involving (5 × 2 =) 10 dependent variables (proportion of responses for wife A and husband A for themes for positive characteristics of marriages domain). Given the numerous themes analyzed, we restrict the presentation of the results to analyses that are relevant for the research questions.

**Analysis of the Research Questions**

**The main effect of ethnic group.** The multivariate main effect of ethnic group was significant for positive characteristics of marriages, Wilks' Lambda = .40, $F(10, 84) = 4.85$, $p < .001$, (partial) $\eta^2 = .37$. Post-hoc comparisons revealed significant differences between Turkish (as well as Turkish-Dutch) and Dutch couples for children-related aspects and reciprocity/mutuality aspects regarding positive characteristics of marriages (results of the Tukey HSD post-hoc tests can be seen in Table 2.2; the patterning of the differences is described in the next paragraph). Similarly, significant results were obtained for negative characteristics of marriages, Wilks' Lambda = .58, $F(12, 82) = 2.17$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .24$. However, the only significant difference was found between the Turkish-Dutch and Dutch couples for personality of the spouse. Ethnic groups significantly differed on determinants of marital satisfaction, Wilks' Lambda = .62, $F(10, 84) = 2.31$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .21$. The only univariate difference was between Turkish and Turkish-Dutch couples (as well as Dutch) for behavior of the spouse. In the analysis of determinants of marital dissatisfaction, multivariate significant differences between the ethnic groups were assessed, Wilks' Lambda = .24, $F(16, 78) = 4.98$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .50$. Turkish and Turkish-Dutch couples differed on bad habit of the spouse and reciprocity/mutuality. Turkish and Dutch couples were different on reciprocity/mutuality and economical aspects. Finally, Turkish-Dutch and Dutch couples were different on bad habit of the spouse, reciprocity/mutuality and aspects related to being/living in the Netherlands.

So, Turkish couples more often referred to children-related aspects (as sources of positive characteristics of marriages) and economical aspects (as sources of marital dissatisfaction) than their Dutch counterparts, whereas Dutch couples more often referred to reciprocity/mutuality (both as sources of positive characteristics and marital dissatisfaction), and behavior of the spouse (as sources of marital satisfaction) as opposed to Turkish couples (*RQ1*). However, Dutch and Turkish couples were found to be similar on various other themes, such as bad habit of the spouse, personality of the spouse, extended family- related aspects, and economical aspects while evaluating their own marriages and marriages in general (both as sources of positive, and negative characteristics and marital (dis) satisfaction). Fewer differences were found between Turkish and Turkish-Dutch couples; Turkish couples were lower on behavior as well as bad habits of the spouse (while talking about marital (dis)satisfaction) compared to the Turkish-Dutch couples and they were higher on reciprocity/mutuality aspect (as sources of marital dissatisfaction). Finally, Turkish-Dutch couples mentioned children-related aspects, bad habit of the spouse and aspects related to being/living in the Netherlands (while referring to positive characteristics and marital dissatisfaction) more than Dutch couples, whereas Dutch couples put more emphasis on reciprocity/mutuality and personality of the spouse (while talking about positive and negative characteristics of their own marriage and marital dissatisfaction in general).

The analysis of spousal communication (*RQ2*) yielded significant ethnic group differences, Wilks' Lambda = .40, $F(4, 90) = 13.19$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .37$; there were univariate differences between the Turkish and Turkish-Dutch couples (as well as Dutch couples) for doing things together, while for emotional sharing differences were obtained between Turkish (as well as Turkish-Dutch) and Dutch couples. Dutch, Turkish, and Turkish-Dutch couples were different on marital conflict (*RQ3*), Wilks' Lambda = .36, $F(12, 82) = 4.73$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .40$. Turkish couples were different from Turkish-Dutch and Dutch couples vis-à-vis children- related marital conflict. However, ethnic groups were similar on marital conflict resolution strategies (*RQ4*), Wilks' Lambda = .83, $F(4, 90) = 2.22$, $p > .05$, $\eta^2 = .09$.

Results on marital roles (*RQ5*) showed significant differences for the main effect of ethnic group, Wilks' Lambda = .30, $F(8, 86) = 8.75$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .45$; Turkish-Dutch and Dutch couples differed on economical aspects, children- related as well as psychological aspects, whereas the only difference between Turkish and Dutch couples was found for psychological aspects.

Our final research question addressed the role of acculturation (*RQ6*). Dutch couples differed from Turkish-Dutch couples in many aspects (children-related and reciprocity/mutuality aspects regarding positive characteristics of marriages, personality of the spouse regarding negative characteristics of marriages, bad habit of the spouse, reciprocity/mutuality and aspects related to being/living in the Netherlands while talking about determinants of marital dissatisfaction, emotional involvement, and economical, children-related and psychological aspects for marital roles), whereas Turkish couples were only different from Turkish-Dutch couples in a few domains (behavior of the spouse regarding marital satisfaction, reciprocity/mutuality and bad habit of the spouse regarding marital dissatisfaction, activities involved with the spouse regarding marital communication and children- related aspects regarding marital conflict).

**The interaction between ethnic group and dyad.** A multivariate significant interaction only emerged for determinants of marital dissatisfaction, Wilks' Lambda = .52, $F(16, 78) = 1.91$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .28$, and marital roles, Wilks' Lambda = .40, $F(8, 86) = 2.26$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .17$. Univariate significant differences were only observed for bad habits of the spouse (as determinants of marital dissatisfaction); Turkish-Dutch wives and husbands showed large differences in bad habits of the spouse ($M = .37$ and .10, respectively), where these differences were much smaller for Dutch wives and husbands ($M = .06$ and .00) and even completely absent in Turkish couples ($M = .00$ for both sexes). The analysis on marital roles revealed that groups only significantly differed on economical roles; Turkish-Dutch wives and husbands showed large differences in economical roles ($M = .95$ and .68, respectively), where these differences were much smaller for Turkish wives and husbands ($M = 1.00$ and .92) and even completely absent in Dutch couples ($M = 1.00$ for both sexes).

## DISCUSSION

### Differences and Similarities of Turkish, Turkish-Dutch, and Dutch Marriages

We examined ethnic group differences and similarities in conceptualizations and perceived antecedents of marital satisfaction among Turkish, Turkish-Dutch, and Dutch couples. We adopted an approach in which qualitative data from semistructured interviews were content analyzed, followed by a quantitative analysis of the category frequencies compiled in the qualitative analyses.



**Ethnic group differences.** Several ethnic group differences can be understood in terms of individualism-collectivism and affluence; we found differences between a more egalitarian and more nuclear family type of marriage in the more affluent and individualistic

Dutch mainstream group, and a less egalitarian and more extended family type of marriage in the less affluent and more collectivistic Turkish environment. Similarly, Georgas et al. (2006) argued that family roles (expressive vs. instrumental) and hierarchical family and kin values differ between more affluent and less affluent countries in ways comparable to what we found in the present study.

Turkish mainstream couples relatively often referred to the role of economical factors as sources of marital dissatisfaction, which is also consistent with previous research. It has been argued that economic distress is positively related to marital dissatisfaction in Turkey (Aytac & Rankin, 2009). Financial dissatisfaction and complaints are believed to be more widespread in less affluent cultures (more collectivistic) than in more affluent cultures (more individualistic; Georgas et al., 2006). In the Turkish mainstream group, most females were housewives living in single-earner households in which husbands were the primary breadwinners. Economical distress (e.g., husband's failure to earn sufficient income to maintain the family) and accompanying marital dissatisfaction are more likely in these families (Aytac & Rankin, 2009). Our results on the value of the spouses are in line with research on the value of children; in more affluent countries (i.e., the Netherlands), the value of children is often viewed in terms of psychological rather than economical needs, similar to an emphasis of psychological roles and emotional sharing among the Dutch couples in our study (for an overview on Value of Children Study, see Kagitcibasi & Ataca, 2005). The relatively few differences between the Turkish and Turkish-Dutch that we found may be due to the fact that part of our Turkish-Dutch sample had a rural background; Turkish-Dutch usually tend to have an ancestry in rural Turkey (Crul & Schneider, 2009). A rural background is often associated with stronger traditional, collectivistic ties where mainstream Turkish couples may be less traditional from urban parts of the country; additionally, some differences may be related to country specifics such as the higher emphasis on bad habits of the spouse; gambling was more often mentioned among Turkish-Dutch probably due to the fact that gambling is legal in the Netherlands.

**Dyadic differences.** In line with the literature on gender differences across cultures (e.g., Williams & Best, 1990), we found dyad by ethnic group interactions only on marital roles and marital dissatisfaction. Turkish-Dutch couples showed larger differences on themes related to bad habit of the spouse and economical roles compared to their Turkish and Dutch counterparts. These gender differences can be understood in terms of the power differential and the patriarchal structure with dominance of males among Turkish-Dutch couples (migrated from rural, more traditional parts of Turkey; Kandiyoti, 1995).

**Ethnic group and dyadic similarities.** We found similarities among ethnic groups (on marital conflict resolution strategies) and dyads (on evaluation of own marriages, spousal communication, marital conflict, and marital conflict resolution strategies). Furthermore, none of the interactions between ethnic group and dyad was significant for evaluation of own marriages, marital satisfaction, spousal communication, marital conflict and conflict resolution strategies. This may be explained in terms of similar number of topics dyads can argue about in a marriage as well as similar number of ways dyads can use to communicate and solve their arguments in different cultures.

This is not the first study to find cross-cultural similarities in marriage-related aspects. Expectations related to spousal communication for marital roles were found to be similar across US and Asian participants (Kline et al., 2012). Another similarity was found between Chinese and Caucasian couples regarding strategies for tension reduction (Cheung, 2005). Those similarities may be related to shared mechanisms underlying marriages; so, there may be certain universal characteristics of marriages, as marriage partners in all countries have to deal with a set of identical issues, such as spousal relationships. In a similar vein, Georgas et al. (2006) claimed that there are certain universals regarding families; emotional bonds are stronger with the nuclear family (with mother, siblings, and father, respectively) than the extended family across countries.

**Marriage and acculturation.** We found that Turkish-Dutch couples were more similar to Turkish than to Dutch couples regarding marriage-related aspects. The main reason for the apparent slow rate of acculturative change is probably that marriage is viewed as part of the private sphere of life; we know from the acculturation literature that adjustment to the country of settlement is slower in the private sphere than the public sphere (e.g., Arends-Toth & van de Vijver, 2004).

**Limitations and Conclusion**

Participants from different groups (either Turkish, Turkish-Dutch, Dutch or wives vs. husbands) show the largest differences in factors contributing to unsatisfying marriages in general and division of household chores.

**Table 2.2** Coding Scheme for Marriage-Related Domains, Examples of Responses, and Proportions of Responses in Which Theme was Mentioned per Ethnic Group and Spouse

| Domain and theme | Examples | Ethnic group | | | Spouse | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Turkish | Turkish-Dutch | Dutch | Wife | Husband |
| *Positive Characteristics of Marriages* | | | | | | |
| Absence of bad habit of the spouse | Never drinks. | .04 | .10 | .03 | .10 | .02 |
| Behavior of the spouse | Accepts whatever I say. | .46 | .63 | .38 | .56 | .42 |
| Children | He is a good father. | $.35_{a}$ | $.24_{a}$ | $.03_{b}$ | .23 | .18 |
| Reciprocity/Mutuality | We share everything. | $.31_{a}$ | $.40_{a}$ | $.85_{b}$ | .47 | .56 |
| Personality of the spouse | She is patient. | .31 | .18 | .12 | $.30_{a}$ | $.11_{b}$ |
| *Negative Characteristics of Marriages* | | | | | | |
| Bad habit of the spouse | She smokes a lot. | .04 | .03 | .09 | $.10_{a}$ | $.00_{b}$ |
| Behavior of the spouse | He works a lot. | .31 | .37 | .47 | .42 | .34 |
| Children | We have differences in raising our children. | .00 | .03 | .03 | .02 | .02 |
| Reciprocity/Mutuality | We do not spend much time together. | .00 | .08 | .15 | .08 | .07 |
| Personality of the spouse | He is stubborn. She is selfish. | $.27_{a, b}$ | $.03_{b}$ | $.32_{a}$ | .25 | .17 |
| Extended family/Parents | He is too close to his family. | .04 | .08 | .00 | .08 | .00 |
| *Determinants of Marital Satisfaction* | | | | | | |
| Behavior of the spouse | Knowing your own responsibilities. | $.85_{a}$ | $1.00_{b}$ | $1.00_{b}$ | .92 | .97 |
| Children | Having children. | .42 | .18 | .35 | $.20_{a}$ | $.44_{b}$ |
| Reciprocity/Mutuality | Mutual respect. | .23 | .35 | .29 | .32 | .29 |
| Personality of the spouse | Caring. Loving. | .11 | .03 | .09 | .11 | .04 |
| Economical aspects | Having sufficient money. | .11 | .05 | .12 | .11 | .08 |
| *Determinants of Marital Dissatisfaction* | | | | | | |
| Bad habit of the spouse | Gambling. | $.02_{a}$ | $.24_{b}$ | $.03_{a}$ | $.14_{a}$ | $.03_{b}$ |
| Behavior of the spouse | Coming home late. | .31 | .29 | .53 | $.52_{a}$ | $.23_{b}$ |
| Children | Arguments because of children. | .01 | .10 | .01 | .03 | .03 |
| Reciprocity/Mutuality | Supporting each other less. | .31a | $.05_{b}$ | $.65_{c}$ | .30 | .37 |
| Personality of the spouse | Self sacrifice. | .02 | .03 | .06 | .04 | .02 |
| Extended family/Parents | Families are involved too much. | .11 | .03 | .00 | .03 | .07 |
| Economical aspects | Financial problems. | $.31_{b}$ | $.18_{a, b}$ | $.06_{a}$ | .11 | .26 |
| Being/living in the Netherlands | Language barrier. | $.00_{b}$ | $.24_{a}$ | $.02_{b}$ | .09 | .07 |

**Table 2.2** Continued

| Domain and theme | Examples | Ethnic group | | | Spouse | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Turkish | Turkish-Dutch | Dutch | Wife | Husband |
| *Determinants of Marital Dissatisfaction* | | | | | | |
| Activities involved together | Shopping. | $.92_{b}$ | $.50_{a}$ | $.47_{a}$ | .71 | .56 |
| Emotional sharing | I share all the problems with my spouse. | $.23_{b}$ | $.29_{b}$ | $.94_{a}$ | .50 | .47 |
| *Reasons for Marital Problems* | | | | | | |
| Behavior of the spouse | Not helping with the housework. | .54 | .24 | .41 | .40 | .39 |
| Children | Having inconsistent views in child rearing. | $.31_{a}$ | $.03_{b}$ | $.01_{b}$ | .15 | .08 |
| Reciprocity/Mutuality | Not sharing much. | .00 | .00 | .00 | .00 | .00 |
| Personality of the spouse | She talks a lot sometimes. | .08 | .10 | .03 | $.02_{a}$ | $.12_{b}$ |
| Extended family/Parents | Families are involved. | .15 | .08 | .00 | .09 | .07 |
| Economical aspects | Financial problems. | .11 | .10 | .15 | .14 | .10 |
| Being/living in the Netherlands | He does not know the Dutch way of living. | .00 | .03 | .03 | .04 | .00 |
| *Ways to Solve Marital Problems* | | | | | | |
| Approach | I do not talk but he talks constantly. | .27 | .13 | .26 | .25 | .19 |
| Withdrawal | I go outside and calm down. | .73 | .53 | .62 | .64 | .61 |
| *Marital Roles* | | | | | | |
| Economical aspects | He earns the money and I take care of the rest. | $.96_{a, b}$ | $.82_{b}$ | $1.00_{a}$ | $.98_{a}$ | $.87_{b}$ |
| Children- related aspects | Being a good mother. | $.38_{a, b}$ | $.18_{b}$ | $.47_{a}$ | $.58_{a}$ | $.11_{b}$ |
| Psychological aspects | Emotionally I will do everything for them. | $.15_{b}$ | $.10_{b}$ | $.76_{a}$ | $.43_{a}$ | $.26_{b}$ |
| Being/living in the Netherlands | Paperwork as my Dutch is better. | .04 | .13 | .02 | .10 | .02 |

**Note. ns:** nonsignificant. In the columns dealing with ethnic group, proportions with a different subscript are significantly different (Tukey HSD post-hoc test).

Larger ethnic group differences were assessed in global tests of marriage-related domains (groups were significantly different on all domains except marital resolution strategies), but more specific analyses revealed many cross-cultural similarities at the level of specific themes. Secondly, marital change due to acculturation can be slow.

Future research could extend the findings of the present study to other cultural groups as well as various immigrant groups in the Netherlands to examine the generalizability of

the present findings so that the problems of a snowballing sampling frame, used in the present study, can be addressed. It is important to note that Turkish, Turkish-Dutch, and Dutch couples differed on marriage arrangement; the majority of Turkish and Turkish-Dutch couples were involved in some sort of arranged marriages (either arranged through family or friends mostly without prior dating), which may influence the generalizability of our results. Future research could control for the effect of marriage arrangement and compare levels of satisfaction of Turkish (and Turkish-Dutch) couples involved in both arranged and love marriages so that it becomes possible to disentangle the effects of marriage arrangement and culture on marital perceptions. Furthermore, future research could compare first- and second-generation Turkish immigrants living in the Netherlands. First- and second-generation Turkish-Dutch sample was not sufficient to make group comparisons in our study. Perceived cultural and marital differences between Turkish and Turkish-Dutch couples can be studied and marital dynamics of low educated and low affluent Dutch couples can be examined in order to test the intracultural variability. Additionally, intercultural marriages may be examined so that in addition to (female) Turkish- (male) Turkish, Turkish-Dutch, Dutch-Turkish, and Dutch-Dutch dyads are compared.

# Chapter 3

## AN ACTOR-PARTNER INTERDEPENDENCE MODEL OF SATISFACTION IN TURKISH, TURKISH-DUTCH, AND DUTCH MARRIAGES

This chapter is based on Celenk, O., & van de Vijver, F. J. R. (2013b). *An actor-partner interdependence model of global satisfaction among Turkish, Turkish-Dutch, and Dutch married couples*. Manuscript submitted for publication.

There is much research showing cross-cultural differences in well-being, with more affluent countries showing higher levels of well-being (e.g., Inglehart, 1997). However, it is not yet known to what extent these differences extend to the relational domain. There is a paucity of data and models of cross-cultural similarities and differences in marital dynamics (i.e., happiness with marital aspects, spousal values, sources of marital conflict, and marital satisfaction). In the present chapter, we aim at examining marital dynamics in married dyads of different groups (i.e., couples living in Turkey, Dutch non-immigrant, and Turkish-Dutch immigrant dyads living in the Netherlands).

Our study examines the role of culture in two ways: we compare marital aspects in two countries, Turkey and the Netherlands and we address the role of culture in these aspects in an acculturating group, Turkish-Dutch immigrants. Our study is one of the first attempts to go beyond the Western dominance in the field of interpersonal relationships. We believe most of the literature on marital dynamics is largely based on research conducted in Western countries, notably in the US and Canada (Madathil & Benshoff, 2008). Hence, the conclusion reached are rather biased in describing marital relationships from what we could call a "romantic love" perspective, and much less is known about the marital aspects perceived by couples outside that framework (e.g., family initiated marriages). Our study is believed to provide insight on this and give some hints to build up a more holistic approach of marital dynamics. More specifically, using the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM; Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006) we examine the cross-cultural validity of a model in which (dis)satisfaction is predicted by various evaluations of both spouses, namely happiness with marital aspects, spousal values, and marital conflict patterns. We also test cross-cultural and dyadic differences and similarities vis-à-vis marriage-related aspects.

**Marital Dynamics as Predictors of Marital Satisfaction**

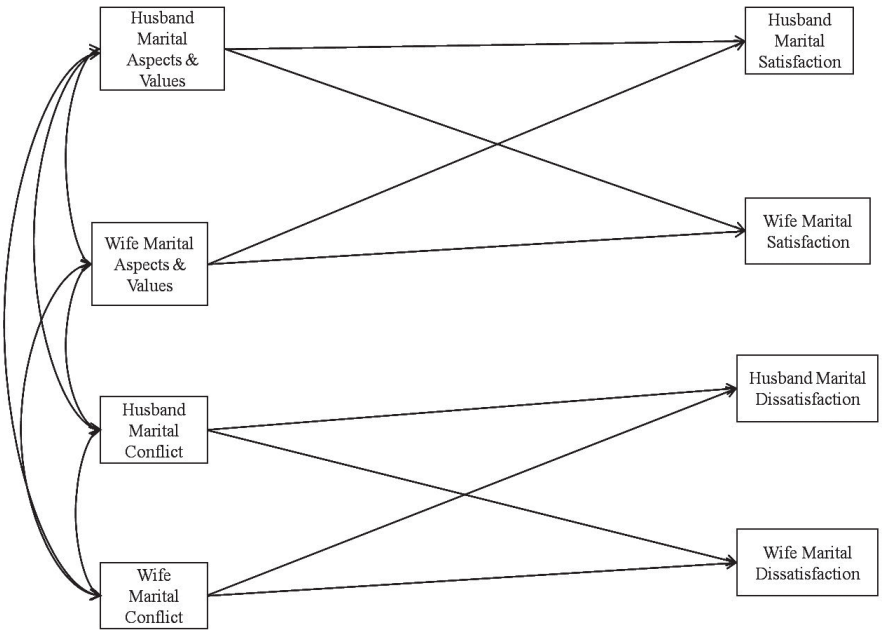
Marital satisfaction can be defined as the subjective, overall happiness with marriage (Heller, Watson, & Ilies, 2004). In the present study, we argue that couples' (dis)satisfaction in their marriages is related to both their own overall (un)happiness with their marriage as well as the (un)happiness of their spouse and that this (dis)satisfaction is predicted by happiness with marital aspects, spousal values, and marital conflict patterns.

Happiness with marital aspects can be defined as experienced satisfaction (pleasantness) with the sense of sharing (e.g., mutuality, companionship) and sense of security (e.g., financial, extended-family related) held by couples based on personal experiences. Spousal values are couples' evaluations of what is desirable in their spouses (Celenk & van de Vijver, 2013c). Finally, marital conflict is a commonly studied concept in relation to satisfaction (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). Main sources of marital conflict, such as unequal division of household chores, jealousy, and communication problems, were all negatively associated with marital satisfaction (Amato & Rogers, 1997). In a previous qualitative study, we found

that Turkish, Turkish-Dutch, and Dutch couples commonly referred to these dynamics in relation to marital satisfaction (Celenk & van de Vijver, 2013a). In sum, we argue that husbands' and wives' happiness with marital aspects and spousal values contribute to their own as well as their partners' marital satisfaction. Additionally, dyads' conflict patterns add to their own and their partners' marital dissatisfaction (see Figure 3.1). We expect that this conceptual model holds in every group as there are no data or models to expect differences in associations across cultures.



**Figure 3.1** The actor-partner interdependence model for Turkish, Turkish-Dutch, and Dutch couples




**Actor-Partner Interdependence and Similarity in Satisfaction**

In the last decade, the study of couple relationships benefits much more if we use a dyadic approach (Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006). It has been suggested that couple relationships need to be examined from a dyadic perspective. Dyadic studies focus on the interpersonal characteristics in addition to the intrapersonal characteristics of couples and are believed to shed light on the complex structure of marriages by integrating wives' and husbands' views.

Numerous studies have addressed interdependence among married couples (e.g., Helms, Walls, Crouter, & McHale, 2010). A commonly used analytical approach —The Actor Partner Interdependence Model (APIM)— distinguishes two processes in marital relationships

(Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006). Firstly, actor's behavior influences actor's outcome, which is called the actor effect (i.e., a wife's marital satisfaction is related with her own spousal values and a husband's marital satisfaction is related with his own spousal values). Secondly, actor's behavior influences partner's outcome, which is called the partner effect (i.e., a wife's spousal values predicts her husband's satisfaction and a husband's spousal values predicts his wife's satisfaction; Pardo, Weisfeld, Hill, & Slatcher, 2013).

In addition to couple interdependence, scholars have examined couple similarity and its influence on marital satisfaction. It has been argued that individuals are attracted to individuals with the same physical characteristics (matching hypothesis; Hatfield & Sprecher, 2009) and who are similar to themselves (assortative mating; de Cara, Barton, & Kirkpatrick, 2008). Mate preferences are influenced by similarities in aspects such as education, age, religion (Gruber-Baldini, Schaie, & Willis, 1995), and attitudes (Singh & Ho, 2000). Furthermore, similarity in identity styles and values has been positively related to couple satisfaction (Cook & Jones, 2002; Gaunt, 2006). In addition to the similarities among various marriage-related aspects among dyads, it has been argued that males and females are more similar in psychological issues than being different; which is defined as the gender similarities hypothesis (Hyde, 2005). Likewise, we anticipate couples in each group to be similar in marriage-related aspects.

**Culture, Acculturation, and Satisfaction**

Researchers have found cultural differences in the effect of communication on marital satisfaction (Rehman & Holtzworth-Munroe, 2007), in the level of interdependence during marital conflict (Wagner, Kirchler, Clack, Tekarslan, & Verma, 1990), in determinants of marital satisfaction (Wong & Goodwin, 2009), and in marital love (Contreras, Hendrick, & Hendrick, 1996).

One of the most common ways in the literature to understand cultural differences and similarities is to refer to value orientations of cultures. Various aspects of couple relationships have been explained in terms of individualism-collectivism (Triandis, 1995). Hofstede (1991) indicated that:

> individualistic cultures pertain to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivistic cultures pertain to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. (p. 51)

In a similar vein, Triandis (1995) argued that collectivistic cultures are tighter, behaviors in these cultures are more directed by rules and norms, and there is an emphasis on vertical relationships (i.e., parent-child relationship), whereas individualistic cultures are believed

to be looser (fewer rules and norms to guide behavior) and horizontal relationships (i.e., wife-husband relationship) are more prevailing. The structure of the families (including nuclear and extended forms) and family functioning (including emotional distance, social interaction, communication, and geographical proximity of the family members) have also been associated with individualism-collectivism (Triandis, 1995) and affluence (Georgas, Berry, van de Vijver, Kagitcibasi, & Poortinga, 2006). Western families tend to be nuclear and attach much value to sharing, communication, and mutuality regarding spousal relationships (can be considered as an emphasis on the sense of sharing), whereas in non-Western cultures involvement of the extended family and children are more salient which can be thought as an emphasis on the sense of security (Celenk & van de Vijver, 2013a).



**Turkish and Dutch couples.** Children and extended family are important among families in Turkey (Aslan, 2009). Results of the Family Values in Turkey Report (2010), which is a large-scale study conducted among 6,000 households, showed that there is an emphasis on involvement of parents in marriages and regular visits of relatives. Furthermore, parents expect filial duties from adult children, as children are seen as old age security. Results also revealed that couples frequently underline loyalty, sacrifice, and the importance of religion in marriages, wives are rather flexible regarding the disloyalty of husbands, and they believe that the head of the family is the husband. However, there was considerable within-country heterogeneity; older, less educated individuals with lower income who mainly live in rural parts mentioned these aspects more than younger, more educated individuals with higher income who live in larger cities. In sum, this large-scale study showed a prevalence of the patriarchal type of marriage, with a nuclear family structure and extended-family function, prominence on the continuity of family, male dominance, and children-centered relationships (Aykan & Wolf, 2000; Wagner, Kirchler, Clack, Tekarslan, & Verma, 1990).

Independence and autonomy characterize the Dutch family. Research into couple relationships has highlighted the importance of autonomy, equalitarian, and liberal values as well as communication, mutual understanding, respect, and disclosure (Finkenauer, Engels, Branje, & Meeus, 2004; van den Troost, 2005). Stevens and Westerhof (2006) found similarity among Dutch wives and husbands in the sense that their emotional involvement was equal in the relationship and both wives and husbands indicated lower negative relationship experiences. Dutch mainstreamers show fewer filial obligations than immigrant groups in the Netherlands (de Valk & Schans, 2008).

Few scholars have examined the differences in couple and family relationships among Turkish and Dutch couples (i.e., Celenk & van de Vijver, 2013a). Yet, the literature suggests patterned differences between Dutch and Turkish families. There is a more egalitarian and nuclear family type of marriage among the Dutch mainstream couples (with a more individualistic and Western orientation) as opposed to the less egalitarian and more

extended family type of marriage among Turkish couples (with a more collectivistic and non-Western orientation). Additionally, in previous studies we found people with a non-Western immigration background are less satisfied in their marriages as compared to individuals with a Western origin (e.g., Celenk & van de Vijver, 2013c).

**Turkish-Dutch immigrant couples.** Psychological acculturation can be defined as psychological processes after migration. Two concepts have been used to describe different ways immigrants deal or want to deal with the ethnic and mainstream culture: *acculturation orientations* (preferences for ethnic culture maintenance and mainstream culture adoption) and *acculturation outcomes,* comprising sociocultural (competence in the mainstream and ethnic culture) and psychological (well-being) outcomes. Integration (a preference for a combination of ethnic cultural maintenance and mainstream culture adoption) is often considered to be the most effective orientation (Berry, Poortinga, Breugelmans, Chasiotis, & Sam, 2011). It is related to creating a sense of belonging to two cultures (assuming that the ethnic and mainstream groups endorse this double orientation). Furthermore, acculturation orientations and outcomes are domain-specific. Research has shown that individuals with a non-Western immigration background (i.e., Turkish and Moroccans) prefer to maintain their heritage culture in the private domain (i.e., spousal or family relationships; Arends-Toth & van de Vijver, 2004).

We know from previous studies in the Netherlands that marital values often do not change quickly in the acculturation process. The immigrant may want to maintain marital values and practices as these are typically seen as central indicators of the heritage identity that are most resistant to acculturative change (Arends-Toth & van de Vijver, 2008). Furthermore, marital relations can provide important resources to deal with acculturative stress. Marriage partners exposed to high levels of acculturative stress (e.g., adjustment problems and discrimination) are more likely to use each other as resources to deal with this stress, which may make the maintenance of ethnic couple relationships more likely (Ait Ouarasse & van de Vijver, 2004). What we do not know in depth is the extent to which the acculturation process varies for wives and husbands and the associations between acculturation-related aspects (i.e., acculturation orientations and outcomes) and marriage-related aspects (i.e., happiness with marital aspects, spousal values, marital conflict patterns, and marital satisfaction) among immigrant groups.

Turkish-Dutch immigrants (the largest non-Western group with an immigration background comprising approximately 2.35% of the total population; Statistics Netherlands, 2012) first came to the Netherlands as so-called “guest workers” in the 1960s. The second source of migration was related to family reunification and the latest source has been family formation (marriage). Around 75% of Turkish-Dutch choose marriage partners from Turkey, typically from their own village or their extended family (Crul & Doomernik, 2003). Turkish

immigrants mostly migrated from rural areas (primarily from central Turkey or the Black Sea region); they mainly had relatively low SES and educational levels (Crul & Schneider, 2009).

Compared to the Dutch mainstreamers, marriage age of the Turkish-Dutch people is earlier; the average ages of marriage for females are 28 and 23 years, and they are 30 and 25 years for men, for the Dutch and Turkish-Dutch, respectively (de Valk, Liefbroer, Esveldt, & Henkens, 2004). Marriage at a young age is believed to decrease the possibility of unchastity among girls and delinquent behaviors among boys (Eldering & Knorth, 1998). Furthermore, households of the Dutch mainstreamers are smaller than Turkish-Dutch households; approximately 40% of Turkish families have five or more members (including the in-laws, parents, and children; Eldering, 1997). Turkish-Dutch first- and second-generation immigrants endorse more traditional family values compared to their Dutch mainstream counterparts (Arends-Toth & van de Vijver, 2009). Similarly, Turkish-Dutch immigrants were found to be higher on family solidarity values across generations compared to other immigrant groups (i.e., Surinamese-Dutch and Antillean-Dutch; Merz, Ozeke-Kocabas, Oort, & Schuengel, 2009).



**The Present Study**

Firstly, we examined the relationships between marriage-related aspects across dyads and cultural groups:

*Hypothesis 1:* We expect that the conceptual model is valid in each cultural group (see Figure 3.1).

*Hypothesis 2:* We expect that conjugal aspects (happiness with marital aspects, values, conflict, and marital satisfaction as well as dissatisfaction) of the dyads have actor and partner effects.

*Hypothesis 3:* We anticipate couple similarity in conjugal aspects across the three groups.

Secondly, group differences on marriage-related aspects were examined:

*Hypothesis 4:* We expect marriage patterns with more emphasis on the sense of security (e.g., extended family and children) to prevail among Turkish couples and marriage patterns with more emphasis on the sense of sharing (e.g., supporting, talking to each other) in spousal relationships among Dutch couples. Furthermore, we expect Dutch couples to be more satisfied in their marriages and report less sources of marital conflict than Turkish couples.

*Hypothesis 5:* We anticipate that Turkish-Dutch immigrant couples are more similar to Turkish couples than to Dutch couples regarding all marriage-related aspects.

Finally, we focused on the relationships between marriage-related and acculturation-related aspects among Turkish-Dutch immigrant couples:

*Hypothesis 6*: Immigrants who opt for an integration strategy show the most favorable acculturation outcomes. Therefore, we expect a positive correlation between acculturation

orientations (i.e., cultural maintenance and adoption) and marital satisfaction. Also, we expect a positive correlation between the orientations and happiness with marital aspects and spousal values. A negative correlation between acculturation orientations (i.e., maintenance and adoption) and marital conflict is anticipated.

*Hypothesis 7:* Sociocultural competence (both in ethnic and mainstream culture) is expected to be positively correlated with happiness with marital aspects and spousal values as well as satisfaction and negatively associated with marital conflict.

*Hypothesis 8:* Psychological outcomes (well-being) are expected to be positively related with all marriage-related aspects (except marital conflict which is expected to be negatively correlated with psychological outcomes).

## METHOD

### Sample

A total of 158 Turkish (i.e., dyads living in Turkey), 122 mainstream Dutch and 80 Turkish-Dutch immigrant couples living in the Netherlands (total of 720 individuals) voluntarily participated in the study. All couples were involved in heterosexual and endogamous (monocultural) marriages. Descriptive statistics of the couples can be seen in Table 3.1.

Couples in Turkey were recruited from four different cities in Turkey in order to ensure within-country heterogeneity. We selected two relatively urban (Istanbul, Ankara) and rural (Artvin, Van) locations (Ogdul, 2010). Additionally, Dutch mainstream couples and Turkish-Dutch immigrant couples were recruited from various areas in the Netherlands (e.g., Amsterdam, Tilburg, and Rotterdam). Turkish-Dutch males (80.77%) and females (73.24%) were mostly born in Turkey and migrated to the Netherlands after the age of six; we considered them as first-generation immigrants (Arends-Toth & van de Vijver, 2008). The majority of Turkish-Dutch first-generation immigrant couples indicated that they migrated from central parts of Turkey (e.g., Kayseri, Yozgat). Furthermore, 79.74% of Turkish wives and 78.00% of husbands self-identified their ethnic background as Turkish; other ethnic backgrounds involved Laz (12.00% for husbands and 9.80% for wives), Kurdish (9.33% for husbands and 9.15% for wives), and other (0.67% for husbands and 1.31% for wives). Likewise, the ethnic background of the Turkish-Dutch immigrant wives and husbands was mostly Turkish (90.55% and 93.41%, respectively); other ethnic backgrounds were Laz (2.63% for husbands and 2.70% for wives), Kurdish (1.32% for husbands and 1.35% for wives), Alevi (1.32% for husbands and 2.70% for wives), and other (1.32% for husbands and 2.70% for wives). Regarding the Dutch mainstream couples, nearly all wives (97.52%) and husbands (99.18%) self-identified as Dutch. Other ethnic backgrounds were Belgian (0.82% for husbands and wives), German (0.83% for wives), and Surinamese (0.83% for wives).

We analyzed whether cultural groups and dyads differed on the demographic variables. Results revealed small (partial $\eta^2$ from .01 to .06 or $|\phi| > .10$; Cohen, 1992) differences for age, education, and employment of wives and husbands. Differences among cultural groups and dyads with medium (partial $\eta^2$ from .06 and .14 or $|\phi| > .30$) and large (partial $\eta^2$ of at least .14 or $|\phi| > .50$) effect sizes were included as covariates (namely SES, number of children, and length of marriage) in the subsequent analyses.

**Materials**

In the present study, we focused on the constructs that were frequently emphasized as important determinants of satisfaction among Turkish, Turkish-Dutch, and Dutch dyads (Celenk & van de Vijver, 2013a). Moreover, Fischer and Corcoran (2007) named numerous measures for clinical practice and research on couples. However, none of the existing scales mentioned by the authors tap into the facets we were interested in. More specifically, our goal was to determine the dynamic nature of marriages by not only focusing on spousal relationships (e.g., spousal values scale) but also focusing on different parties involved in the marriage (e.g., children, extended family) as well as negative aspects (e.g., sources of marital conflict). We believe our measures are applicable both in Western and non-Western contexts and they examine various domains.



**Sociodemographic questionnaire.** Information was collected on participants' age, sex, place of birth, ethnic background, SES (participants were asked to place themselves on a ten rungs ladder while comparing themselves with the people who have the most money, education, and best job in their country), number of children, length of marriage, employment, marriage arrangement, education, and year and reason for migration (only applicable to immigrant couples).

**Happiness with marital aspects.** Couples' current happiness with various marital aspects was assessed by a scale developed by the authors as no existing scales were deemed appropriate for the cross-cultural context of the present study. This self-report scale included 22 items. Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *very unhappy* (1) to *very happy* (5). Results of the Principal Component Analysis revealed two unifactorial subscales. The first subscale (explaining 58.02% of the total variance) dealt with happiness with the sense of sharing and included 15 items (e.g., "Understanding each other", "Being honest to each other"). Cronbach's alphas were .94, .96, and .95 for the Turkish, Turkish-Dutch, and Dutch group, respectively. The second subscale (explaining 39.27% of the total variance) dealt with happiness with the sense of security ($\alpha$ = .72, .81, and .66) and involved seven items (e.g., "Taking financial care of my parents", "Leading my marriage according to the rules of our religion").

**Table 3.1** Sample Descriptive Statistics per Group and Gender

| | Turkish | | Turkish-Dutch | | Dutch | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Background** | **Female** | **Male** | **Female** | **Male** | **Female** | **Male** |
| Mean age (years) | 38.27 | 41.79 | 38.76 | 42.23 | 45.86 | 48.28 |
| Mean length of marriage (years) | 14.28 | 14.28 | 19.33 | 19.33 | 21.54 | 21.54 |
| Mean socioeconomic status | 4.96 | 4.96 | 5.33 | 5.33 | 6.92 | 6.92 |
| Mean number of children | 1.69 | 1.69 | 2.43 | 2.43 | 2.1 | 2.1 |
| Education[a] | | | | | | |
| Primary | 25.95 | 15.19 | 31.58 | 21.80 | 0 | 0 |
| Lower secondary | 10.13 | 16.46 | 21.05 | 32.05 | 21.49 | 10.66 |
| Upper secondary | 33.54 | 25.32 | 35.53 | 28.21 | 40.50 | 39.34 |
| University | 30.38 | 43.03 | 9.21 | 16.66 | 37.18 | 49.18 |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 2.63 | 1.28 | 0.83 | 0.82 |
| Employment[a] | | | | | | |
| Housewife/Retired/Unemployed | 53.29 | 16.11 | 58.18 | 7.41 | 8.77 | 0 |
| Employed | 46.71 | 83.89 | 41.82 | 92.59 | 90.35 | 100 |
| Student | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.88 | 0 |
| Marriage arrangement[a] | | | | | | |
| Family initiated | 50.32 | 51.63 | 67.80 | 67.24 | 1.72 | 0 |
| Couple initiated | 29.03 | 30.07 | 20.34 | 22.41 | 71.55 | 72.65 |
| Friend initiated | 19.36 | 16.99 | 10.16 | 6.90 | 26.73 | 27.35 |
| Other | 1.29 | 1.31 | 1.70 | 3.45 | 0 | 0 |
| Reason for migration[a] | | | | | | |
| Family formation | | | 36.12 | 33.33 | | |
| Employment | | | 19.44 | 41.67 | | |
| Family reunion | | | 44.44 | 25 | | |
| *N* | 158 | 158 | 80 | 80 | 122 | 122 |

**Note**. [a]Percentages

**Spousal values.** Spousal values were assessed by a scale developed by the authors. This self-report scale included 10 items. Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7). The scale had two factors, treated here as subscales. The first subscale (explaining 69.26% of the variance) was named spousal values on the sense of sharing (α = .86, .93, and .89) and the second factor (explaining 59.38% variance) was on the sense of security values (α = .84, .87, and .68). Each statement started with the stem "I value my spouse because:". The former scale included five items (e.g., "My spouse loves me" and "My spouse is giving me personal space"). The latter was composed of five items as well (e.g., "My spouse has good relationships with my parents" and "My spouse is self-sacrificing").

**Sources of marital conflict.** Reasons for marital arguments were assessed by a scale developed by the authors. This self-report scale included 14 items about internal and external reasons.

Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7). The marital conflict scale was divided into two unifactorial subscales. The first subscale (61.91% of the total variance was explained) had eight items (e.g., "We argue because we have unequal division of labor in our marriage" and "We argue because my spouse thinks she/he is the boss outside the house") focusing on arguments related to internal factors (α = .90, .94, and .86). The second subscale (58.17% of the total variance was explained) involved statements dealing with arguments related to external factors (α = .83, .84, and .82) and it had six items (e.g., "Some of our common friends cause arguments in our marriage" and "My parents create arguments in our marriage")



**Marital satisfaction.** The Marital Satisfaction scale was developed by the authors (adapted from the Satisfaction with Life Scale; Diener, Emmons, Larson, & Griffin, 1985). Instead of using standardized marital satisfaction measures, we combined overall happiness as well as unhappiness as we believe they co-exist; yet they do not mirror each other. This self-report scale was composed of 13 items and participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7). The first factor (62.09% of the variance was explained) was related to marital satisfaction (α = .92, .94, and .89) and included nine items (e.g., "Overall, I am happy with my marriage" and "I am happy with my nuclear family"). The second factor (76.43% of the variance was explained) was marital dissatisfaction (α = .93, .93, and .81) which had four items (e.g., "I am still married only because of my children" and "I am still married because being single is difficult").

**Well-being.** Well-being was measured by a shortened version of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). The scale included five items (first factor explained 71.72% of the total variance) and couples were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7). Psychological outcomes were assessed by statements such as "I feel that I am a person of worth" and "I have a positive attitude about myself" (α = .90 for Turkish-Dutch).

**Acculturation orientations.** Turkish-Dutch immigrant couples' acculturation orientations were measured by a scale developed by the authors (in addition to public domain items, we included items on private domain related to marriage and family; adapted from the Acculturation Orientations Scale by Galchenko & van de Vijver, 2007). This self-report scale was composed of 26 items to assess cultural maintenance and adoption. We chose a two-item measurement method in which preference for cultural maintenance and adoption were assessed separately (Arends-Toth & van de Vijver, 2004). Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly*

*agree* (7). The first unifactorial subscale (explaining 44.18% of the total variance) comprised 13 items (e.g., "I find it important to have Dutch friends" and "I find it important to have a relationship with my spouse as Dutch do") for cultural adoption (α = .89) and second subscale (46.92% of the variance was explained) had 13 items (e.g., "I find it important to have Turkish friends", "I find it important to have a relationship with my spouse as Turkish people do") for cultural maintenance (α = .90).

**Acculturation outcomes.** Sociocultural outcomes of Turkish-Dutch immigrant couples were assessed by a scale developed by the authors (in addition to public domain items, we included items related to marriage and family; adapted from the Acculturation Outcomes Scale; Galchenko & van de Vijver, 2007). This self-report scale was composed of 26 items to assess sociocultural outcomes. We adopted a two-item measurement method in which difficulties in cultural maintenance and adoption were assessed separately (Arends-Toth & van de Vijver, 2004). Participants were asked to indicate the amount of difficulty they have experienced in various areas on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *no difficulty* (1) to *extreme difficulty* (5). Sociocultural acculturation outcomes scale involved two unifactorial subscales: Sociocultural competence in the mainstream culture (explained 56.26% of the variance, α = .93) with 13 items (e.g., "Knowing Dutch politics") and sociocultural competence in the ethnic culture (explaining 57.07% of the variance, α = .93) with 13 items (e.g., "Knowing Turkish politics").

We compared loadings, obtained in Principal Component Analyses, across groups to identify whether measures included in the study assess equivalent constructs (van de Vijver & Leung, 1997). Results indicated that all scales we used were structurally equivalent across the three groups as all values of Tucker's phi were above .90 which is believed to indicate structural equivalence.

**Procedure**

The original scales, developed in English, were translated to the target languages (Turkish and Dutch) by bilingual researchers using a committee approach. Couples in Turkey received the questionnaires in Turkish, Dutch mainstream couples received in Dutch and Turkish-Dutch immigrant couples had the possibility to complete the questionnaire either in Turkish or Dutch. In all groups, snowball sampling was used; couples who agreed to complete the questionnaires were asked to suggest other couples whom they thought may be willing to take part in the study as well (it is argued that snowball sampling is frequently used to recruit participants who are otherwise difficult to approach; Greenstein, 2001). Members of each dyad received a separate copy of the questionnaire in an envelope with the informed consent form. They were asked to individually complete and return the questionnaire in a sealed envelope.

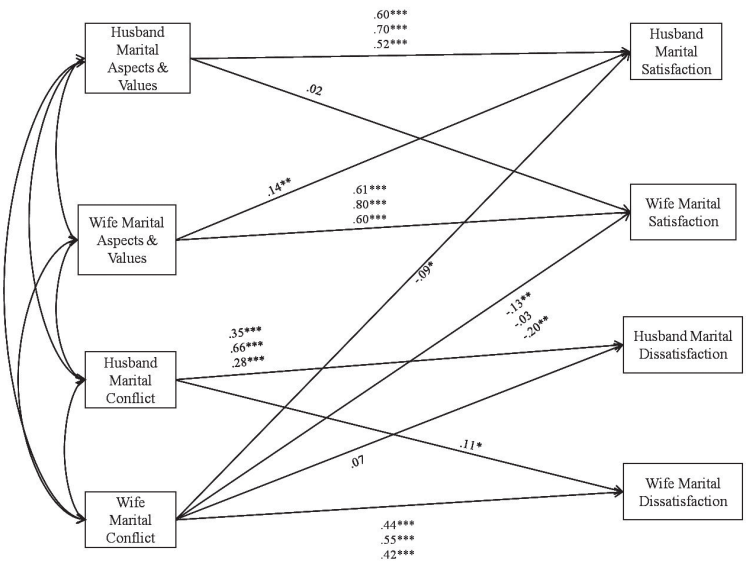
## RESULTS

### Validity of the APIM Model

We first tested the validity of the conceptual model across Turkish, Turkish-Dutch, and Dutch couples (*Hypothesis 1*; see Figure 3.2) and analyzed the actor and partner effects of marital dynamics (*Hypothesis 2*). A multigroup path model was computed in which dynamics for wives and husbands were interdependent in line with the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (for details, see Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006). In the first model (structural weights model), we checked invariance of regression weights across ethnic groups. Actor effects were between husbands' (and wives') happiness with marital aspects and values and their own satisfaction and couples' sources of marital conflict and their own dissatisfaction. Partner effects were the relationships between husbands' (and wives') happiness with marital aspects and values and their partners' satisfaction and their sources of marital conflict and their partners' dissatisfaction. Results indicated that two additional associations were required in the model to reach an acceptable fit, namely between wives' marital conflict and their own satisfaction (actor effect) as well as their marital conflict and their husbands' satisfaction (partner effect).



**Figure 3.2** The actor-partner interdependence model for Turkish, Turkish-Dutch, and Dutch couples




**Note.** Standardized regression weights are given next to the arrows. Arrows with one number denote parameters that are identical for each group; arrows with three numbers present parameters for Turkish, Turkish-Dutch, and Dutch couples, respectively. $^{*}p < .05$. $^{**}p < .01$. $^{***}p < .001$.

It is important to note that in the initial model, we assumed actor and partner effects only for happiness with marital aspects and spousal values/satisfaction and sources of marital conflict/dissatisfaction. These associations were in line with a previous study (Celenk & van de Vijver, 2013d) in which we found that marital satisfaction was more strongly related to positive behaviors and their evaluations.

Overall, we found that all actor effects were more salient than partner effects. We then checked for the invariance of partner effects and non-invariance of actor effects (a partial structural weights model). This partial structural weights model showed a good fit, $\chi^2(34, N = 360) = 53.69$, $p < .05$, $\chi^2/df = 1.58$, TLI = .96, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .04 (see Table 3.2). Explained proportions of variances for marital satisfaction were .45 and .51 for wives and husbands, respectively in the Turkish sample, .69 and .69 in the Turkish-Dutch sample, and .51 and .39 in the Dutch sample. Explained proportions of variances for marital dissatisfaction were much lower, with values of .25 and .15 for wives and husbands, respectively in the Turkish sample, .37 and .47 in the Turkish-Dutch sample, and .25 and .11 in the Dutch sample.

Happiness with marital aspects and spousal values for wives and husbands showed the strongest associations (factor loadings) with their own marital satisfaction. Also, actor effects for the relationship between marital conflict and marital dissatisfaction were more salient than partner effects for both wives and husbands. Yet, there were ethnic group differences; the largest differences emerged for the effect of happiness with marital aspects and spousal values on marital satisfaction for wives and marital conflict on marital dissatisfaction for husbands; Turkish-Dutch group showed stronger associations compared to the other two groups. Regarding the association between marital conflict and satisfaction for wives, Turkish-Dutch group showed the weakest association. While focusing on the partner effects, significant yet relatively weak relationships were between wives' happiness with marital aspects and spousal values and husbands' satisfaction, between wives' conflict and husbands' satisfaction, and finally between husbands' conflict and wives' dissatisfaction.

**Table 3.2** Results of the Multigroup Analysis

| | $\chi^2/df$ | CFI | GFI | AGFI | TLI | RMSEA | $\Delta\chi^2$ | $\Delta df$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Unconstrained | $1.53^{*}$ | .99 | .98 | .89 | .96 | .04 | - | - |
| Structural weights | $2.21^{***}$ | .95 | .94 | .86 | .91 | .06 | $60.35^{***}$ | 20 |
| *Partial structural weights* | *$1.58^{*}$* | *.98* | *.97* | *.89* | *.96* | *.04* | *16.90* | *10* |
| Structural covariances[a] | $3.44^{***}$ | .89 | .90 | .80 | .82 | .08 | $132.04^{***}$ | 20 |
| Structural residuals[a] | $6.38^{***}$ | .68 | .82 | .72 | .61 | .12 | $261.17^{***}$ | 16 |

**Note.** [a] Structural covariances is fixing the variance of the factors to be identical across groups, structural residuals refer to error residual variances related to the dependent factors. Most restrictive model with a good fit is printed in italics. $^{*}p < .05$. $^{***}p < .001$.

**Table 3.3** Results of Multigroup Analysis for Spousal Correlations across Groups (Correlations between Exogenous Variables)

| | | Wife | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Husband** | | **Marital Aspects & Values** | **Marital Conflict** |
| Marital Aspects & Values | Turkish | .40*** | -.39*** |
| | Turkish-Dutch | .69*** | -.30* |
| | Dutch | .40*** | -.22* |
| | | | |
| Marital Conflict | Turkish | -.34*** | .54*** |
| | Turkish-Dutch | -.05 | .48*** |
| | Dutch | -.18 | .37** |

**Note**. *$p$ < .05. **$p$ < .01. ***$p$ < .001.



Correlations between the exogenous variables were mostly significant except for the association between husbands' marital conflict and wives' spousal aspects and values for the Turkish-Dutch and Dutch groups (see Table 3.3). Correlations related to satisfaction variables (i.e., marital satisfaction and dissatisfaction) for wives and husbands across groups can be seen in Table 3.4.

**Table 3.4** Pearson Correlation Matrix for Spousal Correlations across Groups for Satisfaction-Related Variables

| | | Wife | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Husband** | | **Marital Satisfaction** | **Marital Dissatisfaction** |
| Marital Satisfaction | Turkish | .41*** | -.32*** |
| | Turkish-Dutch | .63*** | -.22* |
| | Dutch | .46*** | -.23* |
| Marital Dissatisfaction | Turkish | -.19* | .54*** |
| | Turkish-Dutch | -.14 | .56*** |
| | Dutch | -.09 | .23* |

**Note.** *$p$ < .05. ***$p$ < .001.

Nonsignificant relationships emerged for the associations between husbands' marital dissatisfaction and wives' marital satisfaction in the Turkish-Dutch and Dutch groups. To sum up, while focusing on the factor loadings; actor effects were more salient than the partner effects and the strongest associations were between dyads' happiness with marital aspects and values and their own satisfaction. Furthermore, nonsignificant relationships were between husbands' values and wives' marital satisfaction and wives' conflict and husbands' marital dissatisfaction. In relation to the associations between satisfaction-related variables; majority of the correlations were significant between wives and husbands among ethnic groups. Finally, despite the fact that there were differences across ethnic groups in actor effects, they were mostly not large and not consequential in terms of their psychological interpretation.

**Group Differences and Similarities**

In order to analyze the main effects of culture and dyad as well as their interaction on marriage-related aspects, we conducted separate multivariate repeated measure analyses of covariance in which dyad (wife vs. husband) was the within-subject variable, culture (Turkish vs. Turkish-Dutch vs. Dutch) was the between-subject variable, and number of children, length of marriage, and SES were covariates (as these showed significant group differences with medium or large effect sizes), and happiness with current marital aspects (sharing and security), spousal values (sharing and security), sources of marital conflict (internal and external), marital satisfaction (marital satisfaction and dissatisfaction) were the separate dependent variables.

**Main effects of culture.** Separate multivariate group differences emerged for happiness with marital aspects (with two dependent variables; sharing and non- security; Wilks' $\Lambda$ = .78, $F(4, 650) = 21.97$, $p < .001$, (partial) $\eta^2 = .12$). There were also significant differences for spousal values in sharing and security; Wilks' $\Lambda$ = .79, $F(4, 646) = 19.85$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .11$. Furthermore, sources of marital conflict as internal and external significantly differed across groups; Wilks' $\Lambda$ = .91, $F(4, 646) = 7.85$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .05$. Finally, marital satisfaction as satisfaction and dissatisfaction were significantly different across the groups; Wilks' $\Lambda$ = .92, $F(4, 646) = 7.08$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .04$.

Univariate effects, using pairwise comparisons, showed that the main differences were between the Turkish (both living in Turkey and the Netherlands) and Dutch couples (for details, see Table 3.5); we found that Turkish couples emphasized sense of security (e.g., extended family and children) more than Dutch couples.

**Table 3.5** Estimated Marginal Means per Subscale for Ethnic Group and Dyad

| | | Culture | | | Dyad | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Subscale | Turkish | Turkish-Dutch | Dutch | Wife | Husband |
| Happiness with Current Marital Aspects | Sense of sharing | 4.39 | 4.32 | 4.25 | $4.35_a$ | $4.29_b$ |
| | Sense of security | $4.27_a$ | $4.23_a$ | $3.81_b$ | 4.13 | 4.08 |
| | | | | | | |
| Spousal Values | Sense of sharing | 6.05 | 5.83 | 6.01 | 5.96 | 5.97 |
| | Sense of security | $6.25_a$ | $6.03_a$ | $5.62_b$ | 5.95 | 5.98 |
| | | | | | | |
| Sources of Marital Conflict | Internal reasons | $2.82_a$ | $2.73_a$ | $2.26_b$ | $2.72_a$ | $2.49_b$ |
| | External reasons | $2.59_a$ | $2.62_a$ | $1.84_b$ | 2.40 | 2.30 |
| | | | | | | |
| Marital Satisfaction | Marital satisfaction | 6.07 | 6.07 | 5.90 | 6.01 | 6.01 |
| | Marital dissatisfaction | $1.98_a$ | $2.30_a$ | $1.47_b$ | 1.93 | 1.90 |

**Note.** Means with different subscripts are significantly different (Bonferroni adjustments were used for pairwise comparisons).

Additionally, they reported more sources of marital conflict as well as marital dissatisfaction. Those results altogether supported part of *Hypothesis 4* (except non-significant differences on the sense of sharing regarding happiness with marital aspects and spousal values). The Turkish and Turkish-Dutch immigrant group were similar in all domains including happiness with marital aspects, spousal values, sources of marital conflict, and satisfaction (*Hypothesis 5* was confirmed).

**Main effects of the dyad and interactions with culture.** The within-subject factor addressed dyadic differences and their interaction with culture in order to identify couple similarity (*Hypothesis 3*). Results showed that differences between wives and husbands were nonsignificant for all domains. While focusing on univariate effects, pairwise comparisons showed significant differences for internal reasons for marital conflict and happiness with aspects on security (see Table 3.5). The interaction between culture and dyad was not significant for any marriage-related aspect.



**Acculturation Orientations and Outcomes**

We conducted separate correlation analyses for Turkish-Dutch wives and husbands to examine the relationships between marriage-related and acculturation-related aspects (correlation coefficients can be seen in Table 3.6). The main finding is the large similarity of the correlations between wives and husbands; the correlation of the correlations coefficients of Table 6 is .87 ($p < .001$), while the average absolute difference in correlation is .12 (range: .01 to .33). These statistics suggest that the link between acculturation and marriage is the same for husbands and wives. A Turkish orientation (cultural maintenance) and Turkish behavior (sociocultural competence in the Turkish culture) as well as psychological outcomes (well-being) showed stronger correlations with marriage-related aspects than mainstream orientation (cultural adoption) and behavior (sociocultural competence in the Dutch culture). Regarding acculturation orientations, significant and positive correlations were assessed between cultural maintenance and marriage-related aspects for wives and husbands (non- significant and negative correlations were found between marriage-related aspects and sources of marital conflict and dissatisfaction). This pattern of findings supported part of *Hypothesis 6* in relation to the associations between cultural maintenance and marriage-related variables, whereas correlations for adoption were largely absent.

While focusing on acculturation outcomes, sociocultural competence in the Turkish culture was positively related with spousal values for wives and husbands (and marital satisfaction for husbands). Negative correlations were found between sociocultural competence in the Turkish culture and sources of marital conflict and marital dissatisfaction for wives and husbands. Sociocultural competence in the Dutch culture was found to be negatively correlated with external reasons for marital conflict and with marital dissatisfaction for

wives. Thus, we found support for *Hypothesis 7* in each of the three hypothesis tests. However, correlations for sociocultural competence in the Turkish culture were much stronger than sociocultural competence in the Dutch culture; it seems that sociocultural competence in ethnic culture is more important for marriage-related variables than sociocultural competence in mainstream culture. Finally, psychological outcomes (well-being) were positively related with all marriage-related aspects for wives and husbands (except marital conflict which was not significantly correlated with psychological outcomes; a significant, negative relationship only emerged for internal reasons of marital conflict for wives). Therefore, *Hypothesis 8* was largely confirmed.

**Table 3.6** Pearson Correlation Matrix among Marriage-Related Aspects and Acculturation-Related Aspects for Wives and Husbands

| | | Acculturation-Related Aspects | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Marriage-Related Aspects** | | **Cultural Maintenance** | **Cultural Adoption** | **Sociocultural Competence in Ethnic Culture** | **Sociocultural Competence in Mainstream Culture** | **Psychological Outcomes (Well-being)** |
| Happiness with the Sense of Sharing | Wife | .43*** | .03 | .07 | .01 | .52*** |
| | Husband | .33** | -.12 | .12 | -.08 | .43*** |
| Happiness with the Sense of Security | Wife | .36** | -.03 | .16 | .02 | .39*** |
| | Husband | .35** | -.05 | -.01 | -.04 | .43*** |
| Sharing Values | Wife | .37** | -.08 | .31** | .01 | .61*** |
| | Husband | .33** | -.16 | .30** | .14 | .44*** |
| Security Values | Wife | .39*** | -.03 | .30** | .01 | .61*** |
| | Husband | .30** | -.23* | .41*** | .14 | .38*** |
| Internal Reasons for Conflict | Wife | -.19 | .24* | -.30** | -.15 | -.36** |
| | Husband | .02 | .41*** | -.39*** | -.07 | -.10 |
| External Reasons for Conflict | Wife | -.12 | .07 | -.32** | -.35** | -.20 |
| | Husband | .06 | .32** | -.39*** | -.16 | -.08 |
| Marital Satisfaction | Wife | .48*** | -.03 | .19 | -.02 | .65*** |
| | Husband | .40*** | -.18 | .34** | .09 | .54*** |
| Marital Dissatisfaction | Wife | -.05 | .13 | -.30** | -.28* | -.25* |
| | Husband | -.03 | .46*** | -.46*** | -.13 | -.27* |

**Note.** *$p$ < .05. **$p$ < .01. ***$p$ < .001.

## DISCUSSION

### Validity of the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model

We found that associations among marital dynamics (i.e., happiness with marital aspects, spousal values, sources of marital conflict, marital satisfaction, and dissatisfaction) are similar across cultural groups for the partner effects, whereas the significant differences in actor effects were too small to impact on the interpretation. So, there was tentative evidence that a single model described actor and partner effects in all groups. Our findings extend previous research involving only Western groups (Feeney, 2002) and confirm that an individual's general evaluation of life is also related to the evaluation of his or her marriage that is predicted by his or her perception of numerous marriage-related dynamics among Turkish, Turkish-Dutch, and Dutch couples.



Even though our model clearly demonstrated the interdependence across wives and husbands in marriage-related aspects, actor effects were more salient than partner effects and significant partner effects were found only between wives' values and husbands' satisfaction, between their sources of conflict and husbands' satisfaction, and between husbands' sources of marital conflict and wives' marital dissatisfaction. Additionally, significant relationships were assessed between husbands' and wives' spousal aspects, values, and sources of marital conflict (except for Turkish-Dutch and Dutch couples) and between their dissatisfaction and satisfaction scores (except husbands' dissatisfaction and wives' satisfaction for Turkish-Dutch and Dutch couples). In other words, shared background has an impact on satisfaction (in line with the literature that value similarity between spouses is important in satisfaction; Gaunt, 2006).

We can conclude that wives' and husbands' attitudes do not only affect their own behaviors (outcomes), but they also influence their partners' behaviors and partner effects are identical across groups as far as our measures are concerned. However, we found much stronger actor than partner effects; results suggested that predictors (i.e., marital aspects, spousal values, and marital conflict) are correlated. It could be argued that this correlation is moderated by relationship duration. Therefore, we computed correlations between the differences between husbands' and wives' marital aspects, values, marital conflict, and duration of marriage; only conflict discrepancies between the spouses were found to be significantly and negatively correlated with the duration of marriage. So, the effect of time seems to be modest. Similarly, it was found that personalities of couples do not converge over time (Humbad, Donnellan, Iacono, McGue, & Burt, 2010).

Finally, we found interdependence of positive aspects (i.e., significant positive correlations between husbands' and wives' marital aspects and spousal values) and of negative aspects (i.e., significant positive correlations between husbands' and wives' marital conflict); however, we also found that correlations were much weaker across positive and negative

aspects (i.e., zero or negative correlations between husbands' marital aspects, values and wives' marital conflict, and correlations between husbands' marital conflict and wives' marital aspects and values). In conclusion, evaluations of positive and negative marital aspects do not mirror each other and researchers should consider them both and assess them separately.

**Cross-Cultural and Dyadic Similarities and Differences**

**Cross-cultural similarities and differences.** We aimed at examining the effect of culture on marital dynamics. Results were mostly in line with our expectations; Turkish couples revealed more happiness with the sense of security. They emphasized religion, parenting, extended family in relation to their happiness with marital aspects and spousal values, they named more reasons regarding marital conflict compared to their Dutch counterparts (in line with previous studies; Aykan & Wolf, 2000). These differences can be understood in terms of cultural value theories and affluence; more collectivistic and less affluent Turkish couples attach more value to extended family and children-oriented aspects of marriages than Dutch couples as Turkish couples may depend more on their families and children for survival (Celenk & van de Vijver, 2013a). However, inconsistent with our anticipations and previous research, we did not find cross-cultural differences in sharing (both happiness with marital aspects and spousal values). The reason could be that our items refer to essential (and hence, universal) ingredients of marital relationships (e.g., understanding and tolerance among couples, giving each other personal space) and that the items refer to core elements of couple relationships that do not show significant differences across groups. In other words, the elements of "sharing" are equally important in a dyadic relationship in groups with supposedly distinct value orientations.

Another interesting finding was related to satisfaction; Turkish and Dutch couples did not differ on marital satisfaction. However, differences were obtained for marital dissatisfaction as Turkish couples were more dissatisfied with their marriages. This result suggests that evaluations of happiness and unhappiness are not (mutually exclusive) opposites and that actual group differences may be related to "unhappiness" rather than "happiness"; both Turkish and Dutch couples might have similar evaluations of how happy they are in their marriages but Turkish couples might have more negative evaluations or they might have more negative reasons to continue their marriages (similarly in positive psychology mental health is not defined as the absence of symptoms but rather considered as another dimension; Keyes, 2002).

Turkish and Turkish-Dutch couples were different from Dutch couples in many domains (e.g., happiness with marital aspects, marital conflict); however, couples in Turkey and Turkish-Dutch immigrants in the Netherlands were similar in all marriage-related domains.

The similarity between the two groups can be understood in terms of Turkish-Dutch couples' preference to maintain their ethnic culture in marriage-related domains; a similar preference for cultural maintenance in private domain among first-generation Turkish-Dutch immigrants has been observed before (e.g., Arends-Toth & van de Vijver, 2004).

**Dyadic similarities, differences, and interactions with culture.** Another goal of the study was to identify the degree of couple similarity across groups. We found remarkable patterns; conjugal aspects and satisfaction differ across cultures but they do not vary for wives and husbands in any group. In particular, wives and husbands are similar in their happiness with marital aspects (except sense of sharing), values, marital conflict patterns (except internal sources), marital satisfaction, and marital dissatisfaction; these similarities are consistent among the Turkish, Turkish-Dutch, and Dutch groups. This finding strongly supports the gender similarities hypothesis that anticipates more similarities than differences among males and females (Hyde, 2005) as well as assortative mating (i.e., dyads marry similar others), which was also found to be more salient than convergence (i.e., dyads become more alike after certain time in their relationship) among couples (Humbad, Donnellan, Iacono, McGue, & Burt, 2010).



**Relationship between Marriage and Acculturation**

We found that cultural maintenance is much more important for marriage-related aspects than cultural adoption among Turkish-Dutch couples. In other words, marriage is firmly rooted in ethnic culture (probably not surprising given that 75% of Turkish-Dutch marry a partner from Turkey). Additionally, dyads were similar regarding the relationships between marriage-related and acculturation-related aspects. These findings suggest a pattern in which Turkish immigrants view marriages as an important vehicle of cultural maintenance (Arends-Toth & van de Vijver, 2004). Adopting the Dutch culture is rather unrelated to marriage satisfaction. We found before that Turkish-Dutch prefer to maintain their ethnic culture in the private sphere (Arends-Toth & van de Vijver, 2003). Our results suggest that in our sample of Turkish-Dutch, cultural maintenance and adoption do not mirror each other; these findings provide indirect support of Berry's (1992) bidimensional acculturation model, which is based on the independence of cultural maintenance and adoption.

**Implications of the Study**

Our study highlights the cross-cultural validity of the conceptual model which combines spousal values, marital aspects, sources of marital conflict, as well as satisfaction. Furthermore, differences in the associations of positive aspects and of negative aspects underline that APIM should take the distinction between negative and positive marital aspects into consideration.

The conceptual model used in the present study has not been tested previously across various groups as well as across dyads; consequently, the results of our study contribute to the psychological literature by validating the role of marital dynamics on couples' (dis) satisfaction. Furthermore, cross-cultural and dyadic differences and similarities in different aspects of marriages have rarely been examined. Hence, our results clearly indicate the need to examine couple relationships from a multifaceted theoretical perspective; socioeconomic development *per se* (i.e., affluence) and cultural value theories (i.e., individualism-collectivism) are needed for an understanding of differences (i.e., secure marriage patterns and marital dissatisfaction among Turkish couples) but similarities across cultures (i.e., sense of sharing and similarities across wives and husbands) should also be taken into account for a comprehensive picture. Additionally, our study emphasizes that marital change takes quite some time and individuals, notably in the first generation, may feel strong resistance to acculturative change, which underlines the significance of focusing on marital dynamics among immigrant couples.

The second contribution of the present study is practical; our results indicated the need of cultural awareness and sensitivity to customs, norms, and expectations among marital and family counselors (Madathil & Benshoff, 2008); for example, happiness with marital aspects and conflict differed across Dutch mainstream and Turkish immigrant groups; hence, Dutch counselors are recommended to take into account the differences in couple relationships (e.g., involvement of the extended family in marriages and distinct child-rearing patterns while working with Turkish-Dutch clients). Furthermore, knowledge about similarities and differences among Turkish-Dutch and Dutch couples is vital for policy makers in multicultural societies such as the Netherlands, where family policies should accommodate a wide range of marriage arrangements and relationships.

**Conclusion**

Despite the fruitfulness of our results, our study is not free of limitations. Firstly, we used self-reports and snowball sampling in the study. Other sources such as observational studies and sampling methods such as random sampling are believed to be better alternatives and would help future researchers to reach conclusions that may better generalize. Furthermore, Turkish and Turkish-Dutch couples mostly indicated that their marriages were initiated by their families, whereas the majority of Dutch marriages were initiated by themselves. These group differences make it difficult to reach generalizations across groups. Hence, future research should control for the effect of marriage arrangements. Additionally, couples differed on number of children, length of marriage, and SES. Although we included them as covariates in the study, it would be better to have participants who are similar on these aspects. Regarding the Turkish-Dutch couples, our sample size did not allow us to compute multigroup analysis and in-depth examination of the acculturation dynamics. Finally, future

research could involve first- and second-generation Turkish-Dutch immigrant couples in order to examine the differences on acculturation processes across generations. In spite of all these limitations, we believe our results will help researchers, counselors as well as policy makers to increase the cultural awareness and sensitivity especially in multicultural societies.

# Chapter 4

## WHAT MAKES COUPLES HAPPY? MARITAL AND LIFE SATISFACTION AMONG ETHNIC GROUPS IN THE NETHERLANDS

This chapter is based on Celenk, O., & van de Vijver, F. J. R. (2013). What makes couples happy? Marital and life satisfaction among ethnic groups in the Netherlands. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 44,* 1273-1291. doi:10.1177/0022022113486003

In this chapter, we aim at identifying cultural factors in marriages as they relate to marital and life satisfaction. More specifically, we are interested in associations of psychological aspects of marriages, notably spousal normative beliefs and attitudes (characterized by traditional and harmonious marital types), and marital and life satisfaction across immigrant groups and mainstreamers in the Netherlands. We test the cross-cultural invariance of a model in which marital satisfaction mediates the relation between beliefs, attitudes, and life satisfaction. In addition, the effects of acculturation components, namely ethnic and mainstream identity and perceived discrimination, on marital and life satisfaction are examined. Finally, we address group similarities and differences on associations between the model components and on their means.

## Marital Satisfaction, Its Precursors, and Association with Life Satisfaction

**Marital satisfaction and its association with life satisfaction.** Marital satisfaction, referring to spouses' global evaluation of their marriage, has been extensively studied (e.g., Rosen-Grandon, Myers, & Hattie, 2004). It has been argued that marital satisfaction is related to physical and psychological well-being of individuals as well as satisfaction with their lives (Hawkins & Booth, 2005). Many studies have reported a positive correlation between marital satisfaction and life satisfaction (e.g., Shek, 1995). In line with these findings, there is a bottom-up theoretical approach to life satisfaction, in which the latter is taken to be the result of satisfaction in different domains of life including marriage (Cummins, 1996).

**Spousal beliefs and attitudes as precursors.** Marital norms and attitudes are important for marital satisfaction and cross-cultural differences in these norms and attitudes could be relevant for understanding cross-cultural differences in marital satisfaction (Arends-Toth & van de Vijver, 2008). For instance, the Relate Model (Busby, Holman, & Taniguchi, 2001) holds that interpersonal contexts of family (e.g., family stressors, relationship with parents) and culture (e.g., societal values and religion) affect the intrapersonal context of the individual (e.g., personality traits and personal values). The individual, family, and cultural contexts, in turn, influence couple patterns (e.g., couple communication and conflict resolution). The interaction patterns then influence the overall satisfaction and stability of the relationship (Busby et al., p.309). Additionally, support has been found for a model in which marital characteristics (i.e., love and shared values) mediate the relationship between marital interaction processes (i.e., communication, egalitarian roles, and conflict management) and marital satisfaction (Rosen-Grandon et al., 2004). These studies implicitly assume a line of reasoning in which constructs that are more distal to satisfaction (e.g., background variables) influence constructs that are more proximal (e.g., marital norms and beliefs). The more proximal variables then mediate the relation between the distal variables and

outcomes. However, it should be pointed out that none of these models has been validated in different ethnic groups.

In our conceptual model, we focus on the relationship between psychological marriage components and life satisfaction. Our model also starts from antecedent conditions (spousal beliefs and attitudes) that are presumably more distal to life satisfaction; these antecedents are taken to influence conditions that are more proximal (global marital satisfaction); similar models that move from more distal to more proximal predictors have been proposed in various domains such as models that link attitudes and norms to behavior in social psychology (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). We argue that spousal normative beliefs, which are derived from the expectations of significant others, and spousal attitudes (defined as evaluative judgments of the spouses related to their marriage including preferences, likes and dislikes) together influence marital satisfaction (defined as the general, overall happiness of the spouses related to their marriage). Marital satisfaction then affects life satisfaction, which is defined as the evaluation of the spouses related to their life in general (see Figure 4.1).



**Figure 4.1** Conceptual model with marital satisfaction as mediator for all groups


## Culture and Marriage

**Western and non-Western marriages.** Olson and colleagues (e.g., Olson & Fowers, 1993) demonstrated that there are different marital types including traditional and harmonious marriages which were found to be valid across different ethnic groups in the USA. Their typology was based on 11 relationship domains: Marital satisfaction, personality issues,

communication, conflict resolution, financial agreement, leisure activities, sexual relationship, children and parenting, family and friends, equalitarian roles, and religious orientation. Couples in traditional marriages identified significantly more issues related to children and parenting (how they deal with their children and parenting responsibilities), they put a greater emphasis on religion, and they were found to be lower on overall marital satisfaction compared to couples involved in harmonious marriages who named interpersonal processes and marital satisfaction more. In particular, harmonious couples reported more communication, conflict resolution, leisure activities, and equalitarian roles as opposed to their traditional counterparts.

In more traditional, less affluent, non-Western cultures, partner choice is usually made or initiated by parents. There is a patriarchal structure with a dominance of males in decision making in these marriages and pragmatic, instrumental aspects of a marital relationship tend to be rated as important (Kamo, 1993). In more affluent, Western cultures, the opposite pattern prevails which goes along with freedom of partner choice, egalitarian spousal relationships, romantic love, psychological intimacy, emotional support, and expressiveness. All these features are essential for couple relationships (Kamo, 1993). Compared to non-Western societies, relatively weak and even absent kinship ties exist in Western couples (Georgas et al., 1997); therefore marriage is mostly initiated by the couples themselves. Parents do not interfere in their children's nuclear family households or ask economic support from them (Goldthorpe, 1989). Celenk and van de Vijver (2013a) found that marriage differences between Dutch mainstreamers and Turkish-Dutch immigrants are similarly patterned. The more affluent, Dutch mainstream group is more egalitarian and has a more nuclear family type of marriage with less emphasis on parental involvement and more prominence of emotional sharing and psychological roles, whereas the less affluent, Turkish immigrant group is less egalitarian and has a more extended family type of marriage in which children and economic aspects are more important.

In the present study, we argue that there are different spousal types (traditional and harmonious beliefs and attitudes) which can be characterized as greater preference for emotional sharing, communication, equalitarian roles, resolving conflicts on the one hand (couples with harmonious beliefs and attitudes) and greater emphasis on conventional aspects of marriages on the other hand (couples with traditional beliefs and attitudes). The traditional marriage type is believed to be predominantly found in non-Western countries, whereas the harmonious marriage type prevails mostly in Western mainstream groups. Therefore, we anticipate Western groups in our study to be higher on harmonious aspects in marriages, whereas non-Western groups are expected to be higher on traditional aspects.

Liberal, egalitarian attitudes and beliefs in marriages and feelings of equality, which are more common among individuals from more individualistic, affluent, Western countries, are assumed to be positively related to marital satisfaction (Shachar, 1991; Karney & Frye, 2002).

Similarly, it has been argued that traditional gender role attitudes (stereotypical masculine and feminine attitudes) tend to yield unsatisfying relationships (Rogers & Amato, 2000). Likewise, life satisfaction is believed to be associated with various aspects of individualism and is higher among people from more individualistic, affluent, and Western countries than people from more collectivistic, less affluent, and non-Western countries (Diener & Suh, 1999; Fischer & Boer, 2011). Similarly, Inglehart (1997), making a distinction between a country's orientation on survival (in less affluent countries) or well-being (in more affluent countries), argued that more happiness is reported in countries that are more affluent (which also have more harmonious relationships). Consequently, we expect a positive relationship between harmonious spousal beliefs and attitudes and general marital satisfaction and a negative relationship between traditional spousal beliefs and attitudes and overall marital satisfaction.



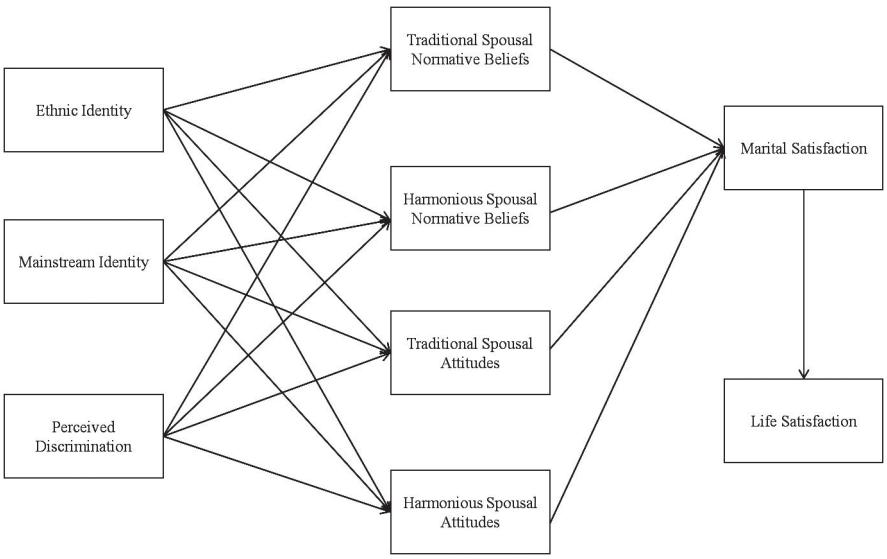
**Acculturation.** It has been suggested that in an acculturation context, ethnic and mainstream identity as well as perceived discrimination need to be taken into account when studying close relationships (Chung & Ting-Toomey, 1999). Ethnic identity is defined as a subjective sense of identification with the culture of heritage and mainstream identity as identification with the host culture (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001). The two types of identity are conceptually independent, though empirically often related (Sanchez & Fernandez, 1993); it is common to find small, negative relations between the two identities. The role of ethnic and mainstream identity in marital relationships is "complex as it is affected by factors such as expectations of the spouses, acculturation levels of the extended family, and the immediate social support system" (Negy & Snyder, 1997, p.419).

There are two major reasons for addressing the role of acculturation components in studies of marital and life satisfaction. Firstly, it has been shown that ethnic and mainstream identity and perceived discrimination are strongly linked to acculturation orientations (referring to the ways in which immigrants want to deal with the home and host culture), which presumably affect maintenance or adoption of marital values, attitudes, and beliefs. Secondly, both ethnic identity (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001) and mainstream identity (Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000) were found to be positively related to psychological well-being among immigrants (which is a part of psychological acculturation outcomes; Ward & Kennedy, 1994) and perceived discrimination was negatively related to general life satisfaction (Verkuyten, 2008).

We assume that ethnic and mainstream identity and perceived discrimination are more distal to marriage-related outcomes than spousal attitudes and beliefs as they focus on broader aspects related to sense of belonging, intergroup relations, and immigrants' feelings about the mainstream country; therefore, we use acculturation components as antecedents. Similarly, Berry, Phinney, Sam, and Vedder (2006) supported the antecedent

role of perceived discrimination and concluded that it is "basic to immigrants' acculturation experiences" (p. 321). We test the adequacy of a model in which these antecedents influence spousal attitudes and beliefs, which in turn affect psychological acculturation outcomes including marital and life satisfaction (see Figure 4.2).

**Figure 4.2** Conceptual model with spousal normative beliefs and attitudes as mediators for immigrant groups




**The Dutch Context**

The immigration history of the groups in the Netherlands after the Second World War is associated with three different types of groups with their own periods of immigration. Residents of former Dutch colonies migrated to the Netherlands including immigrants from Indonesia (around 1950s), Suriname, Dutch Antilles, and Aruba (around 1965); notably the Indonesian group is fully assimilated. In addition to this, recruited "guest workers" migrated to the Netherlands from Southern Europe (around 1950s) and later from Turkey and Morocco (around 1960s). The third type of group consisted of political and religious refugees mainly from Eastern Europe (former East Bloc countries; around 1970s) and Yugoslavia (around 1980s; Schalk-Soekar, van de Vijver, & Hoogsteder, 2004). After the 1980s, the major source of migration was family-related (accounting for almost 40% of the immigration), including family reunification and family formation (Kofman & Meetoo, 2008).

According to Statistics Netherlands (2012), immigrants constitute 20.56% of the total Dutch population. The total number of non-Western immigrants is 55.42% of the total immigrant population, with a majority of Turkish (20.41%), Moroccan (18.74%), Surinamese (18.15%), and Antillean and Aruban immigrants (7.44%). The Indonesian group forms

24.87% of the Western immigrants (individuals from Indonesia are classified as Western due to their assimilation and social and economic position in the Netherlands; Alders, 2001; see also www.cbs.nl/statline). Additionally, Indonesian immigrants were found to perceive themselves as belonging to the Dutch mainstream group (van Osch & Breugelmans, 2012).

It has been found that non-Western immigrants (i.e., Turkish and Moroccan immigrants) perceive a larger cultural distance from the mainstream Dutch group, report more discrimination, and have more negative feelings towards the mainstreamers compared to Western immigrants who perceive a smaller cultural distance (Hagendoorn & Pepels, 2003). Western immigrants come from a cultural background with the same cultural beliefs, attitudes, and values as the mainstreamers (i.e., German and Belgium immigrants) or they are highly assimilated to the Dutch culture (i.e., Indonesian immigrants). Hence, we hypothesize that Western immigrants are similar to Dutch mainstreamers in all respects.



Ethnic identity is more salient among immigrant groups that perceive more discrimination; discrimination tends to reinforce in-group ties (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999). Therefore, we anticipate that non-Western immigrants (i.e., Turkish and Moroccan immigrants) are higher on ethnic identity and perceived discrimination and lower on mainstream identity, whereas Western immigrants are lower on ethnic identity and perceived discrimination and higher on mainstream identity. In a similar vein, we believe that ethnic identity and perceived discrimination positively relate to the traditional marriage type (supposedly preponderant among non-Western groups) and negatively to the harmonious marriage type which is supposedly prevailing among Western groups. Mainstream identity is anticipated to be positively correlated with a harmonious type of marriage (Western groups being higher on both) and negatively with a traditional type of marriage. Furthermore, it has been found that immigrant groups that experience more discrimination are lower on life satisfaction compared to mainstreamers (Safi, 2010). This pattern was also observed among Turkish immigrants and Dutch mainstreamers living in the Netherlands, with Turkish immigrants being less satisfied (Verkuyten, 2008). Hence, we expect that immigrants with non-Western origin have lower life satisfaction compared to Western immigrants and mainstreamers.

**The Present Study**

In the present study, we examined immigrant groups from Western origin (from Indonesia, South Africa, and various Western countries) and non-Western origin (from Turkey, Morocco, Suriname, Antilles, and other non-Western countries) living in the Netherlands as well as Dutch mainstreamers. We examined three main questions: (a) Do the mediation models of Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2 hold? (b) To what extent do diverse immigrant groups and mainstreamers differ in spousal attitudes, beliefs, and marital and life satisfaction? (c)

To what extent do diverse immigrant groups differ in ethnic and mainstream identity and perceived discrimination?

**Hypotheses.** We tested two *hypotheses involving the validity of the conceptual models:*

*Hypothesis 1* (for all groups): Both spousal normative beliefs and attitudes affect marital satisfaction, which in turn predicts life satisfaction in all groups (Figure 4.1). More specifically, traditional spousal normative beliefs and attitudes negatively affect marital satisfaction and life satisfaction. Harmonious spousal normative beliefs and attitudes positively influence marital satisfaction and life satisfaction.

*Hypothesis 2* (for immigrant groups): Ethnic and mainstream identity, and perceived discrimination influence spousal attitudes and beliefs which then predict marital satisfaction and life satisfaction among immigrant groups in the Netherlands (Figure 4.2). More specifically, ethnic identity and perceived discrimination relate positively to traditional spousal normative beliefs and attitudes and negatively to harmonious spousal normative beliefs and attitudes. Mainstream identity relates negatively to traditional spousal normative beliefs and attitudes and positively to harmonious beliefs and attitudes.

We tested four *hypotheses involving group differences:*

*Hypothesis 3*: The non-Western group has the most traditional spousal normative beliefs and attitudes whereas the mainstream Dutch group has the least traditional spousal normative beliefs and attitudes. The Western immigrant group is expected to be similar to the Dutch mainstream group.

*Hypothesis 4*: The mainstream Dutch and Western immigrant groups have the most harmonious spousal normative beliefs and attitudes whereas the non-Western group has the least harmonious spousal normative beliefs and attitudes.

*Hypothesis 5*: The non-Western immigrant group has the lowest marital and general life satisfaction, whereas the mainstream Dutch and Western immigrant groups have the highest marital satisfaction as well as general life satisfaction.

*Hypothesis 6*: The non-Western immigrant group is higher in ethnic identity and perceived discrimination and lower in mainstream identity than the Western immigrant group.

## METHOD

### Participants

All participants were either married or involved in a romantic relationship with their partner for at least five years. Respondents were members of the Tilburg Immigrant Panel[1] that is based on a stratified random sample of immigrant groups in the Netherlands (including a random sample of the mainstream group). The Immigrant Panel is an independent part of the LISS panel of the MESS project (Measurement and Experimentation in the Social Sciences). Frequencies and percentages were calculated for the demographic variables separately for each group (see Table 4.1). Participants were 404 majority group members (50.99% male), 30 Turkish (50.00% male), 37 Moroccan (45.95% male), 24 Antillean (54.17% male), 38 Surinamese (47.37% male), 89 Indonesian (50.56% male), 30 South African (50.00% male), 256 immigrants from other Western origin (mostly from the USA, Germany, Belgium, and other EU countries; 44.14% male), and 66 immigrants from other non-Western origin (mainly from China, Japan, Iraq, and other non-EU countries; 39.39% male). We combined ethnic groups so as to obtain sufficient sample sizes for the statistical analyses. These combinations were based on studies of perceived cultural distance and ethnic hierarchy in the Dutch society (Hagendoorn & Pepels, 2003; Schalk-Soekar, van de Vijver, & Hoogsteder, 2004). In line with Statistics Netherlands' classification (for details of the categories, see www.cbs.nl/statline), we combined Turkish, Moroccan, Antillean, Surinamese, and other non-Western groups and named that group non-Western immigrants ($N$ = 195). Similarly, we combined Indonesian, South African (who are whites, originating from the Afrikaner group with Dutch ancestors), and other Western groups and named the group Western immigrants ($N$ = 375).

In order to check whether ethnic groups differed in background variables, separate ANOVAs were conducted for age, monthly family income, and number of children (see Table 4.1). Groups differed significantly in age, $F(2, 971) = 28.97$, $p < .001$, (partial) $\eta^2 = .06$, and in number of children, $F(2, 971) = 9.94$, $p < .001$, (partial) $\eta^2 = .02$. Furthermore, groups differed significantly in education, $\chi^2(10, N = 963) = 35.25$, $p < .001$. Immigrant groups differed in generational status, $\chi^2(2, N = 570) = 80.07$, $p < .001$. In the further analyses, we controlled for the effect of age, number of children, education, and generational status.



1 The immigrant panel data were collected by CentERdata (Tilburg University, The Netherlands) through its MESS project funded by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research.

**Table 4.1** Sample Descriptives per Ethnic Group

| | Ethnic Group | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Background | Mainstream | Western | Non-Western |
| Mean age (years) | 50.25 | 50.36 | 42.36 |
| Mean monthly family income (Euro) | 3695 | 3676 | 3459 |
| Mean number of children | 0.95 | 0.83 | 1.27 |
| Generation[a] | | | |
| First generation | | 41.33 | 76.41 |
| Second generation | | 32.54 | 22.56 |
| Third generation | | 26.13 | 1.03 |
| Employment[a] | | | |
| Employed | 69.31 | 64.42 | 64.36 |
| Unemployed | 29.45 | 33.15 | 30.85 |
| Looking for a job | 1.24 | 2.43 | 4.79 |
| Education[a] | | | |
| Primary School | 5.20 | 8.27 | 12.50 |
| Lower secondary education | 20.05 | 15.47 | 15.22 |
| Higher secondary education | 9.65 | 12.00 | 9.24 |
| Secondary vocational education | 26.24 | 18.92 | 29.89 |
| Higher vocational education | 25.74 | 22.67 | 20.65 |
| University education | 13.12 | 22.67 | 12.50 |

**Note**. [a]Percentage

## Materials

**Sociodemographic questionnaire.** Participants' age, sex, ethnicity, generation (only applicable to immigrant groups), relationship status, monthly family income, number of children, employment, and education were asked prior to the completion of the questionnaire.

**Spousal normative beliefs.** Spousal normative beliefs were assessed by a scale developed by the authors. This self-report scale included 10 items for the dimensions of traditional and harmonious spousal normative beliefs. Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7). Spousal normative beliefs were assessed by the following items: "Women should be more submissive in the marriage", "Spouses should be financially independent", "Spouses should be equal in their marriage", "Spouses should be autonomous in their marriage", "Spouses should let their children free when they are 18", "In-laws should be involved in the marriage", "Spouses should have close contact with each other's relatives and extended family", "Spouses should have the same religion", "Women should raise children and do the housework" and "Spouses should be each other's best friends."

**Spousal attitudes.** Preferences of the spouses were assessed by a scale developed by the authors. This self-report scale included nine items for the dimensions of traditional and harmonious spousal attitudes. Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7). Each item to measure spousal attitudes started with the stem "To be happy in my marriage, it is now important for me to:"; the stem was followed by an item-specific continuation: "Support my parents financially when they are in need", "Lead my marriage according to the rules of our religion", "Have fun together with my spouse", "Love each other", "Have sufficient money to cover our basic needs", "Be autonomous", "Share certain cultural traditions and customs", "Be able to share my problems related to my parents or my in-laws with my spouse", and "Have children."



**Ethnic and mainstream identity.** Ethnic and mainstream identity of the immigrant groups were measured by a 10 item-self-report scale (adapted from previous studies including Verkuyten, 2007). Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *completely disagree* (1) to *completely agree* (5). Examples of items to measure ethnic identity among immigrant groups are "Being < ethnicity> is an important part of who I am" and "I am proud to be <ethnicity>". Mainstream identity of the immigrant groups was measured by statements such as "Being Dutch is an important part of who I am" and "I am proud to be Dutch."[2]

**Perceived discrimination.** Perceived discrimination was measured by 10 items (adapted from previous scales including Phinney, Madden, & Santos, 1998 and Verkuyten, 1998) and participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *completely disagree* (1) to *completely agree* (5). Examples of items are "I am ignored or excluded because I am a foreigner" and "I do not feel accepted by some Dutch."

**Marital satisfaction.** The Marital Satisfaction Scale was developed by Celenk and van de Vijver (2013b; adapted from the Satisfaction with Life Scale, Diener, Emmons, Larson, & Griffin, 1985). This self-report scale was composed of six items and participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7). An example of an item is "I am happy with my marriage."

2 Ethnic and mainstream identity measures were not applicable to other non-Western and other Western immigrant groups. Analyses dealing with ethnic and mainstream identity only included the Western and non-Western immigrants (namely Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese, Antillean, Indonesian, and South African).

**Life satisfaction.** General life satisfaction was measured by the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larson, & Griffin, 1985). This self-report scale was composed of five items and participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7). An example of an item is "If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing."

### Procedure

Members of the Immigrant Panel completed the questionnaires online. Each participant received 15 Euro for completing the questionnaire. Completion of the questionnaires took 15 minutes for each participant. Data from the previous waves of the panel on ethnic and mainstream identity, perceived discrimination, and life satisfaction were obtained from the Liss panel website (http://www.lissdata.nl/).

## RESULTS

Results of the study included two parts; in the first section we addressed the psychometric properties of the measures, notably scalar and metric equivalence, using principal components analyses and confirmatory factor analyses, and internal consistencies, using reliability analyses. In the second part, we tested the hypotheses.

### Psychometric Properties

**Principal component analysis.** In order to test the underlying dimensions in each scale, principal component analyses were computed for spousal normative beliefs, spousal attitudes, marital satisfaction, ethnic and mainstream identity, perceived discrimination, and life satisfaction scales.

For spousal normative beliefs, two factors, labeled traditional and harmonious normative beliefs, explained 55.88% of the variance. Factor loadings of three items were lower than .50 (factor loadings higher than .50 are considered fair; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007), hence they were excluded ("Spouses should be equal in their marriage", "Spouses should have close contact with each other's relatives and extended family", and "Spouses should be each other's best friends"). The analysis of the spousal attitudes scale revealed two factors, named traditional and harmonious spousal attitudes, accounting for 73.73% of the variance. Four of the items used in the original scale were excluded due to their small factor loadings ("To be happy in my marriage, it is now important for me to have sufficient money to cover our basic needs", "To be happy in my marriage, it is now important for me to be autonomous", "To be happy in my marriage, it is now important for me to have children", and "To be happy

in my marriage, it is now important for me to be able to share my problems related to my parents or my in-laws with my spouse"). For marital satisfaction, a principal component analysis yielded one factor, accounting for 73.49% of the total variance[3]. In the ethnic and mainstream identity scale, two factors were found (one for each identity), explaining 64.71% of the variance. For perceived discrimination, only administered in the immigrant groups, one factor explained 72.10% of the variance. For general life satisfaction, a principal component analysis yielded one factor, accounting for 66.56% of the total variance.

**Metric and scalar equivalence.** In order to identify whether measures included in the study assess equivalent constructs (structural equivalence) and whether they are on the same scale in each group (scalar equivalence; van de Vijver & Leung, 1997), we employed confirmatory factor analysis. Results are presented in Table 4.2. As can be seen there, invariance of measurement weights was well supported for all instruments. For most scales the fit decreased when scalar invariance was tested (notably the information measures increased consistently). However, the fit statistics of these models were still quite acceptable.



**Table 4.2** Measurement Invariance of the Scales: Measurement Weight and Intercept Invariance

| Scale | Invariance | $\chi^2/df$ | TLI | CFI | RMSEA | AIC | BCC |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Spousal normative beliefs | MW | 1.52* | .97 | .98 | .02 | 189.17 | 192.74 |
| | Intercepts | 3.05*** | .90 | .91 | .05 | 270.00 | 272.76 |
| Spousal attitudes | MW | 1.64* | .99 | .99 | .03 | 113.52 | 115.33 |
| | Intercepts | 4.17*** | .94 | .94 | .06 | 180.77 | 182.15 |
| Marital satisfaction | MW | 4.38*** | .97 | .99 | .06 | 221.49 | 224.30 |
| | Intercepts | 3.42*** | .98 | .98 | .05 | 214.65 | 216.68 |
| Life satisfaction | MW | 3.23*** | .97 | .99 | .05 | 140.98 | 142.83 |
| | Intercepts | 3.02*** | .98 | .98 | .05 | 147.52 | 148.94 |
| Identity | MW | 1.84*** | .94 | .95 | .06 | 248.40 | 259.82 |
| | Intercepts | 1.96*** | .93 | .93 | .06 | 256.72 | 266.17 |
| Perceived discrimination | MW | 4.06*** | .95 | .96 | .07 | 401.87 | 407.43 |
| | Intercepts | 4.37*** | .95 | .95 | .08 | 447.19 | 451.84 |

**Note**. TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index. CFI = Comparative Fit Index. RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation. AIC = Akaike Information Criterion. BCC = Browne-Cudeck Criterion. MW = Measurement Weights. $^{*}p < .05$. $^{***}p < .001$.

3 In other to test conceptual distinctiveness of spousal attitudes and marital satisfaction scales, we computed additional principal component analysis in which items of traditional and harmonious spousal attitudes and marital satisfaction scales were included. Results revealed three distinct factors; first factor included all marital satisfaction scale items (explained 45.60% of the variance), second factor included all harmonious spousal attitudes scale items (explained 16.86% of the variance), and third factor had all traditional spousal attitudes scale items (explained 11.82% of the variance).

Therefore, we decided that scalar equivalence of the scales was fairly well supported and that group means could be meaningfully compared[4].

**Reliability analysis.** The internal consistency of the (sub)scales was computed per ethnic group. All (sub)scales showed sufficient internal consistencies (values higher than .70 are adequate by common standards; Cicchetti, 1994), except for traditional attitudes (α = .60) and harmonious normative beliefs (α = .61) in the Western group and traditional normative beliefs in the mainstream group (α = .61) .

### Hypotheses Testing

**Mediation model for all groups.** We conducted a multigroup analysis to test the applicability of the mediation model of Figure 4.3 in both immigrant groups and mainstreamers. The structural weights model was the most restrictive model with a good fit (see upper part of Table 4.3).[5]

Proportions of explained variances for life satisfaction were .21, .19, and .18 for the mainstream, non-Western, and Western sample, respectively. Standardized regression weights are presented in Figure 4.4. It can be seen in the Figure that in all groups, the direct effects of harmonious spousal attitudes and normative beliefs on marital satisfaction and of marital satisfaction on life satisfaction were significant.

We were also interested in the significance of indirect effects of attitudes and normative beliefs on life satisfaction. Using a bootstrapping procedure, we found that all indirect effects were nonsignificant; the exception was a small, positive effect of harmonious spousal attitudes on life satisfaction, β = .19, $p < .01$, 95% CI [.14, .23] for mainstreamers, β = .23, $p < .01$, 95% CI [.16, .30] for non-Westerners, and β =.15, $p < .01$, 95% CI [.11, .18] for Western immigrants and a small negative effect of harmonious spousal normative beliefs on life satisfaction, β = -.04, $p < .05$, 95% CI [-.07, .00] for mainstreamers, β = -.03, $p < .05$, 95% CI [-.07, .00] for non-Westerners, and β = -.03, $p < .05$, 95% CI [-.06, .00] for Western immigrants. To sum up, we found a single conceptual model to be valid across ethnic groups; in the model marital satisfaction mediated the relationship between spousal attitudes, spousal normative beliefs and life satisfaction (*Hypothesis 1* was confirmed).

4 As a further step, in order to examine whether our results meet the criteria for partial measurement invariance, we used a partial measurement invariance approach in which we deleted items based on the large differences on intercepts across groups and recomputed the analyses. In the final step, we compared the means based on the scalar equivalence (measurement intercepts) and partial measurement invariance and we did not find differences in partial h2 values.

5 It has been repeatedly shown that some goodness-of-fit statistics such as Likelihood Ratio Test Statistic are quite sensitive to sample size; hence, "researchers have addressed the χ2 limitations by developing goodness-of-fit indices that take a more pragmatic approach to the evaluation process" (Byrne, 2010, p. 77). The criterion for choosing the model with the best fit is not only related to chi-square, degrees of freedom or the significance but additional cut-off values are RMSEA < .05, GFI > .90, AGFI > .90, CFI > .90 (van de Vijver & Leung, 1997).

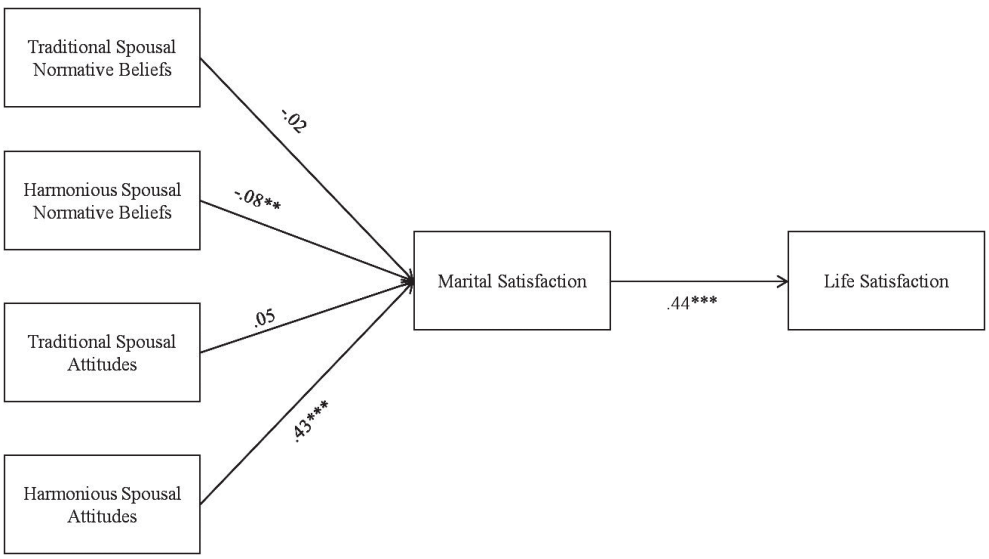
**Table 4.3** Results of the Multigroup Analyses

| | $\chi^2/df$ | CFI | GFI | AGFI | TLI | AIC | RMSEA | $\Delta\chi^2$ | $\Delta df$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (a) Invariance test of all groups of model of Figure 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| Unconstrained | 1.11 | 1.00 | 1.00 | .98 | .99 | 115.31 | .01 | - | - |
| *Structural weights* | *1.30* | *.99* | *.99* | *.97* | *.98* | *110.54* | *.02* | *15.23* | *10* |
| Structural covariances[a] | 3.37*** | .82 | .95 | .92 | .81 | 183.52 | .05 | 112.97*** | 20 |
| Structural residuals[a] | 3.18*** | .82 | .94 | .92 | .82 | 180.18 | .05 | 4.66 | 4 |
| (b) Invariance test of immigrant groups including acculturation variables | | | | | | | | | |
| Unconstrained | 1.24 | .97 | .97 | .90 | .92 | 160.26 | .03 | - | - |
| *Structural weights* | *1.06* | *.99* | *.96* | *.92* | *.98* | *139.59* | *.02* | *13.34* | *17* |
| Structural covariances[a] | 1.35 | .92 | .95 | .90 | .89 | 148.17 | .04 | 20.58** | 6 |
| Structural residuals[a] | 1.75*** | .81 | .92 | .88 | .76 | 165.36 | .06 | 35.19*** | 9 |

**Note.** [a] Structural covariances is fixing the variance of the factors to be identical across groups, structural residuals refer to error residual variances related to the dependent factors. Most restrictive model with a good fit is printed in italics.
*$p$ < .05. **$p$ < .01. ***$p$ < .001.

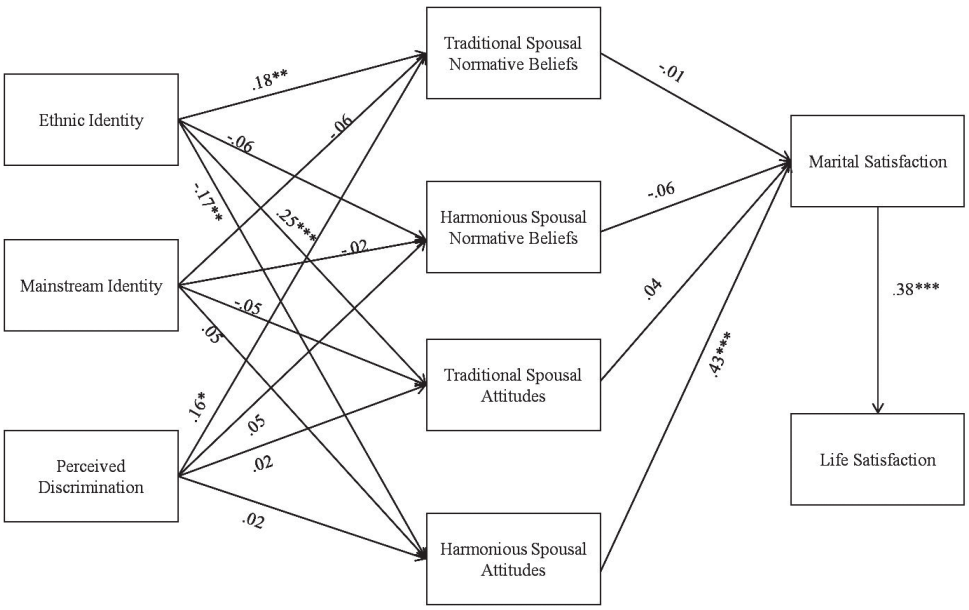


**Figure 4.3** Conceptual model with marital satisfaction as mediator for all groups




**Note.** Standardized regression weights are given next to the arrows.
*$p$ < .05. **$p$ < .01. ***$p$ <.001.

**Figure 4.4** Conceptual model with spousal attitudes and beliefs as mediator for immigrant groups




**Note.** Standardized regression weights are given next to the arrows.
$^{*}p < .05$. $^{**}p < .01$. $^{***}p < .001$.

**Mediation model for immigrant groups.** We conducted a multigroup analysis to test the effect of ethnic and mainstream identity and perceived discrimination on marital and life satisfaction through spousal normative beliefs and attitudes among immigrant groups in the Netherlands. The most restrictive model with an appropriate fit was again the structural weights model (see lower part of Table 4.3). Proportions of explained variances for life satisfaction were .15 and .12 for the non-Western and Western samples, respectively. Results revealed few significant direct effects (see Figure 4.4). In both groups, ethnic identity and perceived discrimination were positively and significantly related to traditional beliefs, while ethnic identity was positively related to traditional attitudes and negatively related to harmonious spousal attitudes. The latter harmonious attitudes were significantly and positively associated with marital satisfaction, and marital satisfaction was significantly and positively associated with life satisfaction.

Bootstrapping was performed to assess the significance of indirect effects of attitudes and spousal beliefs on life satisfaction and the indirect effects of ethnic and mainstream identity as well as perceived discrimination on marital and life satisfaction; only harmonious spousal attitudes indirectly and positively influenced life satisfaction, $\beta = .18$, $p < .01$, 95% CI [.10, .29] for the non-Western and $\beta = .13$, $p < .01$, 95% CI [.06, .22] for the Western immigrants.

In summary, various direct effects were significant; ethnic identity had the strongest positive relationship with traditional spousal attitudes, harmonious spousal attitudes had the strongest positive relationship with marital satisfaction and marital satisfaction had the strongest positive relationship with life satisfaction. Indirect effects were close to zero. Results altogether confirmed that spousal attitudes mediated the relationship between acculturation components and satisfaction across immigrant groups (therefore, *Hypothesis 2* was partially confirmed).

**Differences between immigrant groups and mainstreamers.** In order to test ethnic group differences on spousal normative beliefs and attitudes, MANCOVAs were conducted in which ethnic group (mainstream vs. non-Western vs. Western) was the independent variable, age, number of children, and education were covariates (as these showed significant group differences), and spousal normative beliefs (ranging from traditional to harmonious), spousal attitudes (also ranging from traditional to harmonious), satisfaction (marital and life satisfaction) were the dependent variables.



**Table 4.4** *Estimated Means per Subscale and Ethnic Group*

| | Ethnic group | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Mainstream | Western | Non-Western |
| Spousal Normative Beliefs | | | |
| Traditional | $2.05_{a}$ | $2.12_{a}$ | $2.55_{b}$ |
| Harmonious | 4.47 | 4.62 | 4.38 |
| Spousal Attitudes | | | |
| Traditional | $4.11_{a}$ | $4.18_{a}$ | $4.77_{b}$ |
| Harmonious | $6.52_{a}$ | $6.61_{a}$ | $6.34_{b}$ |
| Acculturation Components | | | |
| Ethnic identity | NA | 2.98 | 2.85 |
| Mainstream identity | NA | $3.49_{b}$ | $3.25_{a}$ |
| Perceived Discrimination | NA | $1.98_{b}$ | $2.29_{a}$ |
| Marital Satisfaction | $5.88_{a, b}$ | $5.97_{a}$ | $5.71_{b}$ |
| Life Satisfaction | 5.13 | 5.13 | 4.93 |

**Note.** Means are based on estimated marginal means. Subscripts of means indicate pairwise comparisons. Means with different subscripts are significantly different. Bonferroni adjustments were used for pairwise comparisons.

There were significant, yet small differences in spousal normative beliefs across ethnic groups, Wilks' Lambda = .96, $F(4, 1912) = 9.77$, $p < .001$, (partial) $\eta^2 = .02$. Results of the pairwise comparisons showed that significant differences in traditional spousal normative beliefs emerged between mainstreamers and non-Western immigrants as well as between non-Western and Western immigrants.

In addition, traditional spousal normative beliefs did not significantly differ between mainstreamers and Western immigrants. Results supported the *first part of Hypothesis 3* on traditional spousal normative beliefs. On the other hand, group differences between mainstreamers (Western immigrants) and non-Western immigrants were nonsignificant for harmonious spousal normative beliefs (estimated means for each variable split by ethnic group can be found in Table 4.4). Hence, the *first part of Hypothesis 4* on harmonious spousal normative beliefs was rejected.

The multivariate main effect of ethnic group was significant for spousal attitudes, showing a small effect size, Wilks' Lambda = .94, $F(4, 1912) = 15.27$, $p < .001$, (partial) $\eta^2 = .03$. Pairwise comparisons revealed significant differences between mainstreamers (Western immigrants) and non-Western immigrants for traditional spousal attitudes. Results altogether confirmed the *second part of Hypothesis 3* on spousal attitudes. Furthermore, results revealed that mainstreamers were significantly higher on harmonious spousal attitudes than non-Western immigrants. Finally, Western immigrants were significantly higher than non-Western immigrants on harmonious spousal attitudes. Results yielded support for the *second part of Hypothesis 4* on harmonious spousal attitudes.

The two satisfaction measures showed a significant multivariate effect for ethnic groups, Wilks' Lambda = .99, $F(4, 1912) = 2.48$, $p < .05$, (partial) $\eta^2 = .01$. Only marital satisfaction significantly differed across ethnic groups, $F(2, 957) = 4.12$, $p < .05$, (partial) $\eta^2 = .01$. Post hoc tests revealed that significant group differences only emerged between non-Western and Western immigrants. Furthermore, results showed nonsignificant differences for general life satisfaction, $F(2, 957) = 2.31$, *ns*. Results partially supported *Hypothesis 5* (disconfirming the differences between mainstreamers and non-Western immigrants on both marital and life satisfaction and between non-Western and Western immigrants on life satisfaction).

**Differences between immigrant groups.** In order to test differences between ethnic groups on acculturation components, a MANCOVA was conducted in which ethnic group (non-Western vs. Western) was the independent variable, age, number of children, education and generational status were covariates, and acculturation components (ethnic identity and mainstream identity) were the dependent variables. The multivariate main effect of ethnic group was nonsignificant for acculturation components, Wilks' Lambda = .98, $F(2, 234) = 2.67$, *ns*. However, mainstream identity significantly differed across ethnic groups, $F(1, 235) = 4.60$, $p < .05$, (partial) $\eta^2 = .02$ (therefore, we found partial support for *Hypothesis 6*).
Finally, an ANOVA was conducted to assess differences between immigrant groups on perceived discrimination. Results showed significant differences on perceived discrimination between non-Western and Western immigrants, $F(1, 553) = 13.37$, $p < .001$, (partial) $\eta^2 = .02$. Non-Western immigrants reported significantly more discrimination than Western immigrants (support for *Hypothesis 6*).

## DISCUSSION

### Mediation Models of Marital Satisfaction across Ethnic Groups

In the present study, we tested two different mediation models. The first model focused on marital satisfaction as the mediator between spousal normative beliefs, attitudes, and general life satisfaction in mainstreamers, as well as non-Western and Western immigrant groups in the Netherlands. The second model focused on immigrant groups and added ethnic and mainstream identity and perceived discrimination to that relationship.

The first model was supported, which implies that spousal normative beliefs and attitudes are only important for (the more distal) life satisfaction through (the more proximal) marital satisfaction. Harmonious spousal attitudes (subjective preferences of the spouses which are derived from modern features in spousal relationships) positively influenced marital satisfaction the most and marital satisfaction was positively related to life satisfaction the most across the three groups. Consistent with the previous literature (e.g., Busby et al., 2001), we found a relationship in which more specific spousal expectations and preferences influence general marital evaluations which in turn affects general life evaluations in all groups. Harmonious spousal attitudes had the strongest, positive direct association with marital satisfaction and the strongest, positive indirect relation with life satisfaction. These results can be explained in terms of the relative importance of attitudes compared to beliefs on evaluations of marriages and general evaluations of lives. Terry and Hogg (1996) argued that the effect of beliefs on behavior is weak and sometimes nonsignificant. The more central role of spousal attitudes in general marital as well as life evaluations compared to spousal expectations may be a consequence of the difference in focus of both; our attitude measure involved more preferences that are closer to practices and perceived needs in a relationship (e.g., what is now needed in my relationship to make me happy?), whereas beliefs referred more to prescriptive norms. Moreover, marital satisfaction had a strong and positive relation with life satisfaction. In line with our expectations and previous literature, results can be understood in terms of the bottom-up approach of life satisfaction; general life satisfaction is composed of satisfaction in various domains including marriage (e.g., Shek, 1995).

There has been interest in the literature in the role of cultural congruence of the norms of the immigrant and the receiving society (e.g., Ward & Chang, 1997). The idea behind the cultural fit hypothesis is that immigrants will find it easier to adjust to an environment that is more similar to their own value pattern. Although we did not test a cultural fit model in the present study, it should be pointed out that our finding that the same pattern of antecedents and mediating variables applies to immigrant groups is difficult to reconcile with a cultural fit hypothesis.

The second model, in which the influence of more distal acculturation components and spousal normative beliefs and attitudes on life satisfaction is only through more proximal marital satisfaction, was also supported. Ethnic identity and perceived discrimination were positively and directly linked to traditional spousal normative beliefs among immigrant groups. Ethnic identity was significantly and positively related to traditional spousal attitudes, and negatively to harmonious spousal attitudes as anticipated. Similarly, our study concurs with earlier findings that ethnic belonging which is part of ethnic identity predicts traditional gender beliefs (Abreu, Goodyear, Campos, & Newcomb, 2000). Likewise, perceived discrimination was positively related to traditional family values among immigrants in the Netherlands (Arends-Toth & van de Vijver, 2008).

**Differences and Similarities across Ethnic Groups**

An important goal of the current study was to test group differences and similarities on spousal normative beliefs, attitudes, marital and life satisfaction, and acculturation components. Group differences emerged between the mainstream and non-Western immigrant group and between the immigrant groups. Results revealed significant differences in traditional spousal normative beliefs and attitudes, and harmonious attitudes between non-Western immigrants and mainstreamers as well as between non-Western and Western immigrants. Additionally, marital satisfaction, mainstream identity, and perceived discrimination differed between non-Western and Western immigrants.

Group differences in spousal normative beliefs and attitudes were in line with Kamo (1993); Western immigrants and mainstreamers who are presumably involved in more egalitarian, nuclear type of romantic relationships were higher on harmonious attitudes and lower on traditional attitudes and beliefs, compared to the immigrants in the non-Western group who are believed to be less egalitarian and higher on parental and children involvement in romantic relationships, as confirmed by their stronger traditional beliefs and attitudes and less harmonious attitudes.

Another difference was found for marital satisfaction; Western immigrants were higher on marital satisfaction than non-Western immigrants. There may be two possible explanations for this group difference. Firstly, the two groups differed in family income: Family income of Western immigrants was higher compared to non-Western immigrants. Scholars have consistently reported similar results which underline the positive and strong association between socioeconomic factors including income and marital satisfaction (e.g., Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000). Our analysis revealed a nonsignificant association between income and marital satisfaction at the individual level. At the group level, income may be associated with differences in marital satisfaction. Therefore, we conducted an ANCOVA, with ethnic group as the independent variable, marital satisfaction as the dependent variable and family income as the covariate. Ethnic group differences in marital satisfaction did not change after

correcting for income. Alternatively, group differences in beliefs and attitudes, related to marital satisfaction, may have an impact on the differences in marital satisfaction (in line with our path model). We tested this reasoning by conducting an ANCOVA, in which marital satisfaction was the dependent variable, and ethnic group was the independent variable, spousal normative beliefs and attitudes were the covariates. All ethnic group differences in marital satisfaction disappeared after the correction. Hence, the latter explanation in which differences in beliefs and attitudes may help us to explain group differences in marital satisfaction is more likely to be valid than the former one which links income with marital satisfaction differences among groups.

Finally, Western immigrants had a stronger mainstream identity and perceived less discrimination than non-Western immigrants, consistent with our expectations and the literature. Individuals who perceive less discrimination identify themselves more with the mainstream group due to their similarity and familiarity with the mainstream Dutch group than less similar non-Western immigrants (Verkuyten, 2008). It is remarkable that non-Western immigrants did not show a stronger ethnic identity than Western immigrants and that ethnic identity showed a lower score than mainstream identity in both groups where we found the opposite in previous studies (e.g., Schalk-Soekar et al., 2004). This pattern suggests that immigrant groups in our sample were fairly well adjusted to their new culture.



Contrary to our expectation, the three groups were similar in life satisfaction; the non-Western group showed the expected lowest score but the difference was not significant. Differences in predictors of life satisfaction across various cultural groups may underlie this similarity. Oishi, Diener, Lucas, and Suh (1999) identified cross-cultural variations in the predictors of life satisfaction. For instance, life satisfaction was more strongly predicted by satisfaction with esteem needs among individualistic people compared to collectivistic people. Additionally, previous research finding differences on life satisfaction heavily relied on comparing Western groups and East Asians (Tov & Diener, 2007). Our non-Western sample might have different characteristics than East Asians that could explain the similarities across groups. A striking similarity was found between mainstream and Western immigrants in all aspects including spousal normative beliefs, attitudes and marital and life satisfaction. This similarity can be related to common characteristics of Western immigrants and Dutch mainstreamers. Western immigrants come from countries like Germany and Indonesia, which either share similar cultural values and beliefs or are assimilated to the mainstream Dutch culture.

In all groups, harmonious spousal attitudes and norms were higher than traditional attitudes and norms. Additionally, mainstream identity was found to be higher than ethnic identity regardless of the group. This difference could be due to social desirability. In order to check whether our results were affected by social desirability, we obtained social desirability scores from previous panel waves. We computed a MANCOVA in order to test

whether group differences in social desirability may have an effect on the differences in spousal attitudes and norms. In our analysis, traditional and harmonious spousal attitudes, and norms were the dependent variables, ethnic group was the independent variable, and social desirability was the covariate (in addition to age, education, and number of children). Similarly, we computed a MANCOVA in which ethnic and mainstream identity were the dependent variables, ethnic group was the independent variable, and social desirability was the covariate (in addition to age, education, number of children, and generation). All ethnic group differences in attitudes, norms as well as identity remained the same after the correction. Therefore, ethnic group differences in norms, attitudes, and identity could not be explained by social desirability.

**Limitations and Conclusion**

There were some limitations to our study which were mainly related to the sample characteristics and method of data collection. The sample size per immigrant group was insufficient for analyses, especially for multigroup analyses (i.e., 24 Antillean and 30 Turkish immigrants); therefore, we merged the immigrant groups. It was not possible to concentrate on differences between each immigrant group and reach conclusions regarding those groups. Furthermore, there is an agreement with panel members that each monthly questionnaire takes about 15 minutes to complete; thus, we included relatively small numbers of items per subscale which may have challenged the coverage of the constructs by the instruments.

Future research needs to extend our findings by validating similar distal to proximal mediation models of marriages and extending it to other ethnic groups. Finally, the present study mainly examined spousal preferences and the participants' general evaluations regarding their marriages. Spousal behaviors may be combined with spousal attitudes in order to get a more comprehensive picture of marital relationships. In conclusion, despite the limitations of our study, we underline three important points. First, life satisfaction can be predicted by proximal (marital satisfaction) and distal factors (spousal normative beliefs and attitudes), and this is true across different ethnic groups in the Netherlands. Second, acculturation components need to be taken into account when studying satisfaction in immigrant groups. Finally, ethnic groups differ in certain aspects of marriages including spousal normative beliefs, attitudes, and satisfaction. Our results could help counselors and policy makers in multicultural societies to make culture-informed choices.

# Chapter 5

## PARTNER BEHAVIORS AND SATISFACTION AMONG IMMIGRANTS AND ETHNIC DUTCH IN THE NETHERLANDS: A 28-DAY DIARY STUDY

This chapter is based on Celenk, O., & van de Vijver, F. J. R. (2013d). *Partner behaviors and satisfaction among immigrants and mainstreamers in the Netherlands: A 28-day diary study*. Manuscript submitted for publication.

In a previous study it was found that immigrants with a Western origin are more satisfied in their relationships than immigrants with a non-Western origin living in the Netherlands (for details see Celenk & van de Vijver, 2013c). The present chapter addresses the background of these differences by focusing on cultural value orientations (i.e., individualism-collectivism, power distance, and self expression-survival) as well as emotional expressiveness which relate to partner behavior. Do partners display different behaviors towards each other in different ethnic groups, are the evaluations of these behaviors different, or do both behaviors and evaluations differ? The present study aims at identifying the link between positive and negative partner behaviors and satisfaction in close relationships across immigrants and mainstreamers in the Netherlands. More specifically, we are interested in how various behaviors displayed toward the partner are evaluated by the partner as pleasant or unpleasant, and how this evaluation in turn affects satisfaction (i.e., relationship and life satisfaction). We also test ethnic group differences and similarities in these aspects. Finally, we examine fluctuations in the occurrence and evaluation of pleasant and unpleasant partner behaviors for four weeks by using a diary method.

**Partner Behaviors, Relationship and Life Satisfaction**

Satisfying relationships lead to satisfying lives and reduce health problems (Bolger, Stadler, Paprocki, & DeLongis, 2010). Relationship satisfaction is the overall happiness with marriage and derives from various sources (Celenk & van de Vijver, 2013c). Previous research has shown that positive partner behaviors (e.g., loving, appreciating) are positively related with relationship satisfaction, whereas negative partner behaviors (e.g., yelling, humiliating) are negatively related (Feeney, 2002). Rehman and Holtzworth-Munroe (2007) found similar relations for positive and negative communication behaviors and marital satisfaction among white American and immigrant Pakistani couples in America, and Pakistani couples in Pakistan.

The link between positive/negative behaviors and more/less relationship satisfaction has been well established. Yet, the link could be mediated by the appraisal of these behaviors as (un)pleasant. In a previous study, we found that the more wives named sources of marital conflict, the less they were satisfied in their marriages and lives in general. The association was similar for Turkish, Dutch, and Turkish-Dutch married couples (Celenk & van de Vijver, 2013b). In the present study we extend this relationship and examine the extent to which the occurrence of the positive and negative behaviors leads to experiences of pleasantness of these behaviors and pleasantness which then influence relationship and life satisfaction (see Figure 5.1).

**Ethnic group differences.** It has been argued that culture influences both the occurrence and evaluation of positive and negative behaviors (Slavin, Rainer, McCreary, & Gowda,

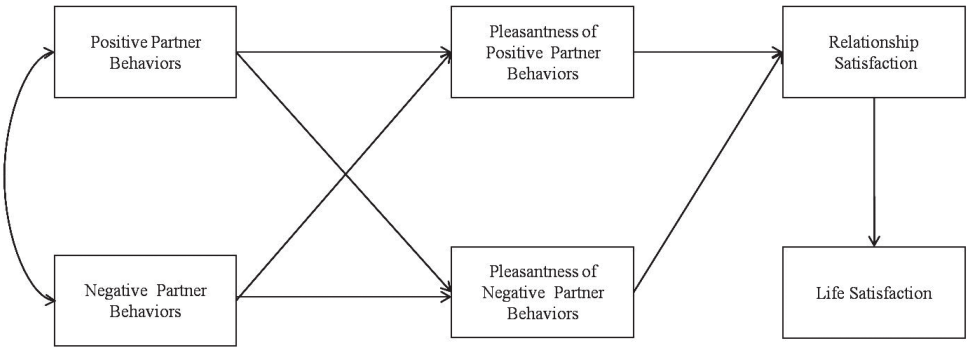
1991). However, there have been conflicting and competing perspectives regarding the way culture affects these behaviors. Therefore, we present different frameworks in relation to both the occurrence and evaluation of positive and negative partner behaviors.

The frameworks for the occurrence of partner behaviors are individualism-collectivism, emotional expressiveness (we make the extension to behaviors and assume that this difference in expression of emotions also involves behaviors) on the one hand, and power distance on the other hand. The role of these frameworks with regard to positive behaviors is obvious (it will be higher in couples with a Western origin), but the role with regard to negative behaviors is not clear as two different types of reasoning have been proposed: either couples with a Western origin display more negative behaviors or negative behaviors are more prevalent among couples with a non-Western background. More specifically, the first framework involves individualism-collectivism (Triandis, 1995) and related models of emotional expressiveness (Matsumoto et al., 2008). Matsumoto and colleagues (2008) argued that people in individualistic cultures are more likely to maximize their positive emotions than people collectivistic cultures; they are more expressive regardless of the type of the emotion compared to members of the collectivistic cultures. Moreover, in more collectivistic, non-Western cultures, conformity is more important (Kim & Markus, 1999). Hence, individuals in collectivistic cultures are more stressed about "fitting into" their in-groups, which is believed to result in expressing fewer negative emotions in order to maintain harmony, cohesion, and conformity (Triandis, 1995). Likewise, Miyamoto and Ma (2011) found that Westerners are more likely to "upregulate" their positive emotions, whereas Easterners tend to "downregulate" their positive emotions, which was explained in terms of dialectical beliefs (e.g., bad things happen after too much happiness). In this line of reasoning (based on individualism-collectivism and emotional expressiveness), couples with a Western origin are expected to show more positive and negative behaviors compared to couples with a non-Western origin.



However, there is a second and competing theoretical perspective on ethnic group differences in negative partner behaviors. This framework mainly draws on power distance. Western marriages are characterized by core values like equalitarianism, mutuality, sharing, and autonomy (MacDonald, Marshall, Gere, Shimotomai, & Lies, 2012). However, other values prevail in non-Western marriages, such as parental involvement in the marriage, male dominance, harmony, loyalty, cohesion, and intergenerational family solidarity (Celenk & van de Vijver, 2013b; Merz, Ozeke-Kocabas, Oort, & Schuengel, 2009). These marital values are associated with power distance and hierarchy. Non-Western cultures have been found to be higher on power distance (more inequality and hierarchy among people; Hofstede, 1991) compared to Western cultures. As a reflection of this larger power distance, non-Western marriages can be expected to show more negative behaviors due to their hierarchical structure with male dominance and female submissiveness, as compared

**Figure 5.1** Conceptual model with pleasantness of partner behaviors as mediator for all groups




to Western marriages that are more based on egalitarianism of the partners. In line with these arguments, negative behaviors were displayed more frequently by Chinese than American couples and the former were less satisfied with their relationships than the latter (Williamson et al., 2012). In a similar vein, Chinese couples displayed more anger towards each other compared to couples in other groups (e.g., Dutch couples; Schoebi, Wang, Ababkov, & Perrez, 2010). So, based on power distance, couples a non-Western origin are believed to show more negative behaviors than couples with a Western origin.

With regards to the evaluation of partner behaviors, there is also evidence that cultural factors may moderate the evaluation of positive and negative behaviors. Firstly, based on cultural value dimensions, Kuppens, Realo, and Diener (2008) concluded that the association between the experience of positive behaviors and life satisfaction was found to be stronger and positive in self-expression valuing nations (e.g., high on socioeconomic status, emphasis on tolerance, equality; Inglehart & Baker, 2000) compared to survival valuing nations (e.g., where is main concern is on survival, material things; Inglehart & Baker, 2000). Additionally negative behaviors were found to be more salient in individualistic (more self-focused, autonomous) than collectivistic nations (more moderate relationships to protect harmony and conformity); the experience of negative behaviors showed a stronger, negative association with life satisfaction in individualistic nations compared to collectivistic nations (Kuppens, Realo, & Diener, 2008). Hence, it may be argued that positive behaviors are evaluated more positively and negative behaviors are evaluated more negatively by Western dyads as compared to non-Western dyads.

However, there is an opposing perspective mainly related to the contrast effect (Sherman, Ahlm, Berman, & Lynn, 1978). It has been argued that individuals who frequently experience positive things get used to these and therefore find these less pleasant compared to individuals who experience positive events infrequently and find these more pleasant (Oishi, Diener, Choi, Kim-Prieto, & Choi, 2007). Similarly, individuals who experience negative events

more frequently evaluate these events as less unpleasant as opposed to individuals who experience negative events less frequently. In this line of argument, couples with a Western background would evaluate positive behaviors less positively and negative behavior more negatively compared to couples with a non-Western background (as couples in each group frequently experience these behaviors). To sum up, models of ethnic differences in the occurrence and evaluation of partner behaviors largely yield conflicting predictions.

**Migration Backgrounds in the Netherlands**

There were three migration waves to the Netherlands after the Second World War. The first migration wave included former Dutch colonies: immigrants from Indonesia (around 1950s), Suriname, Dutch Antilles, and Aruba (around 1965). The second wave was related to employment and included immigrants from Southern Europe (around 1950s), Turkey, and Morocco (around 1960s). The third wave involved political and religious refugees from former East Bloc countries (around 1970s) and Yugoslavia (around 1980s; Schalk-Soekar, van de Vijver, & Hoogsteder, 2004). After the 1980s, family reunification and formation were the key reasons for migration (Kofman & Meetoo, 2008).

Statistics Netherlands classifies individuals with a Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese, and Antillean-Aruban origin as having a non-Western immigration background. On the other hand, Indonesian individuals are classified as having a Western immigration background as they are fully assimilated (for details of the classifications of individuals with a foreign background see also Alders, 2001; www.cbs.nl/statline). According to Statistics Netherlands (2012), there are 3,494,193 individuals with a non-Western (1,937,651) and Western (1,556,542) background (20.89% of the total population). The non-Western group includes immigrants from Turkey (392,923; 20.28% of the non-Western immigrant population), Morocco (362,954; 18.73%), Suriname (346,797; 17.90%), and the Dutch Antilles and Aruba (143,992; 7.43%). Indonesian immigrants constitute 24.26% (377,618) of the Western immigrants.

It has been suggested that it is crucial to take psychological acculturation (psychological processes that take place after migration; Contreras, Hendrick, & Hendrick; 1996) or cultural value dimensions (e.g., individualism-collectivism; Triandis, 1995) into consideration while examining couple relationships across different ethnic groups. Previous studies have concluded that non-Western immigrants are relatively different from Western immigrants and mainstreamers in relation to marital dynamics; they prefer to maintain their heritage culture in couple relationships instead of adopting the mainstream Dutch culture (Celenk & van de Vijver, 2013c; Merz et al., 2009).

### The Present Study

In the present study, we examined the relationship between positive and negative partner behaviors and marital and life satisfaction across immigrant groups and mainstreamers in the Netherlands. Immigrant groups included individuals with an assimilated, usually Western background (e.g., Indonesian and White South African individuals) as well as a non-Western background (e.g., Turkish and Moroccan individuals).

Our study used a diary approach to assess the fluctuations in the occurrence of positive and negative behaviors and accompanying experienced levels of pleasantness and unpleasantness by the partner. It has been argued that diary studies on couple relationships examine the dynamic nature of these relationships by an exhaustive and a precise examination of the behaviors (Bolger, Davis, & Rafaeli, 2003; Laurenceau, Barrett, & Rovine, 2005).

The present study dealt with addressing various research questions mentioned below. Firstly, we were interested in examining the differences on spousal behaviors among ethnic groups in the Netherlands:

*Research Question 1:* To what extent do ethnic groups in the Netherlands differ on the occurrence and evaluation of positive and negative behaviors, and relationship and life satisfaction?

Secondly, we were interested in examining the associations between spousal behaviors and relationship and life satisfaction across ethnic groups in the Netherlands:

*Research Question 2*: To what extent does the model depicted in Figure 5.1 hold in each group?

Finally, we were interested in the weekly fluctuations on spousal behaviors among ethnic groups in the Netherlands:

*Research Question 3*: To what extent do the occurrence and evaluation of positive and negative partner behaviors fluctuate over four weeks among ethnic groups in the Netherlands?

## METHOD

### Sample

Participants were recruited via the Tilburg Immigrant Panel[1], which is composed of a representative sample of people with an immigration background and mainstream group members who participate in monthly internet surveys in the Netherlands. The panel is based on a true probability sample of households drawn from the population register

1 The immigrant panel data were collected by CentERdata (Tilburg University, The Netherlands) through its MESS project funded by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research.

(Scherpenzeel & Das, 2010). The Immigrant Panel is an independent part of the Longitudinal Internet Studies for the Social Sciences (LISS) panel of the MESS project (Measurement and Experimentation in the Social Sciences). Detailed sample characteristics can be seen in Table 5.1. Mainstream participants included 85 individuals (56.5% female), non-Western group was composed of people with Turkish (*N* = 31; 54.8% female), Moroccan (*N* = 35; 45.7% female), Surinamese origins (*N* = 17; 52.9% female), Antillean (*N* =13; 46.2% female), and immigrants with other non-Western backgrounds (mainly from China, Japan, Iraq, and other non-EU countries; *N* = 32; 56.3% female). Western immigrants had Indonesian (*N* = 47; 51.1% female), South African origins (*N* = 22; 63.6% female), and other Western backgrounds (mostly from Germany, Belgium, and other EU countries; *N* = 80; 58.8% female). In subsequent analyses, we combined groups in order to acquire adequate sample sizes (in line with Statistics Netherlands classifications and previous studies; Celenk & van de Vijver, 2013c). The final sample included 85 mainstream individuals, 128 non-Western immigrants, and 149 Western immigrants (a total of 362 individuals completed the diaries)[2].

**Table 5.1** Sample Descriptives per Ethnic Group

| | Ethnic Group | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Background** | **Mainstream** | **Non-Western** | **Western** |
| Mean age (years) | 48.73 | 41.02 | 50.20 |
| Mean number of children | 1.18 | 1.52 | .91 |
| Employment[a] | | | |
| Employed | 70.59 | 67.19 | 62.42 |
| Unemployed | 27.06 | 25.78 | 34.90 |
| Looking for a job | 2.35 | 7.03 | 2.68 |
| Education[a] | | | |
| Primary School | 2.35 | 10.74 | 5.41 |
| Lower secondary education | 23.53 | 18.18 | 17.57 |
| Higher secondary education | 2.35 | 9.09 | 10.14 |
| Secondary vocational education | 29.41 | 29.75 | 18.91 |
| Higher vocational education | 30.59 | 23.97 | 25.67 |
| University education | 11.77 | 8.27 | 22.30 |
| *N* | *85* | *128* | *149* |

**Note.** [a]Percentage

2 The initial sample included 454 individuals; we excluded 92 individuals as they did not complete the diaries for more than 20 days. We compared differences between the individuals who were excluded from the study (*N*=92) and who were included in the final step (*N*=362) on sex, education, age, occupation, and number of children in order to examine the self-selectiveness of the sample. Results revealed non-significant differences for all background variables.

We tested ethnic group differences on background characteristics. Results revealed that age of the participants significantly differed across groups, $F(2, 359) = 22.87$, $p < .001$, (partial) $\eta^2 = .11$. Number of children was different across ethnic groups as well, $F(2, 359) = 9.13$, $p < .001$, (partial) $\eta^2 = .05$. Significant differences were also assessed for education (categories in line with Statistics Netherlands' classification; www.cbs.nl/statline), $\chi^2(10, N = 362) = 25.75$, $p < .001$, $|\phi| = .19$. Profession was not significantly different across groups, $\chi^2(4, N = 362) = 6.79$, $p > .05$, $|\phi| = .10$. We controlled for the effects of age, education, and number of children in the subsequent analyses as they showed significant differences across groups (for details of means and frequencies, see Table 5.1).

**Materials**

**Demographics.** Participants were asked to provide information on their age, number of children, occupation, and education (education was considered as a socioeconomic status indicator; in line with the Report of the APA Task Force on Socioeconomic Status, 2007).

**Diary on partner behaviors.** To assess partner behaviors for 28 days, we included items adapted from the Spouse Observation Checklist (Weiss & Perry, 1983). We included 12 items to measure positive partner behaviors (e.g., "My partner showed appreciation", "My partner greeted me kindly today", and "My partner asked my opinion about something"). Negative partner behaviors were assessed by eight items (e.g., "My partner dominated the conversation", "My partner yelled at me", and "My partner humiliated me"). Participants were first asked to indicate whether or not their partner displayed the behavior on that particular day (to assess frequency) and then they indicated to what extent they found the behavior pleasant, using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from *completely unpleasant* (1) to *completely pleasant* (7).

Due to the extensive amount of data and many missing values, we aggregated scores to average weekly scores in the reliability analyses (separate analysis for the occurrence and evaluation of positive and negative behaviors for Week 1 to 4). For the occurrence of positive behaviors, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were .94, .94, and .95, and they were .89, .95, and .94 for the occurrence of negative behaviors for mainstream, non-Western, and Western groups, respectively. For the evaluation of positive behaviors, alphas were .96, .93, and .95, and they were .80, .89, and .94 for the evaluation of negative behaviors for mainstream, non-Western, and Western groups, respectively[3].

3 We computed Missing Value Analysis in SPSS (EM algorithm was used) in order to replace missing values for pleasant and unpleasant partner behaviors for 28 days, 14 days, and seven days. Results revealed high percentages of missing values (average of 24.13% and 46.55% for 28 days, 11.40% and 32.95% for 14 days, and 4.30% and 22.15% for seven days for the occurrence and evaluation, respectively) with the violation of MCAR. Therefore, we could only use weekly scores separately for their occurrence and evaluation (four weeks which were the average of 28 days). Results of the Little's MCAR test were $\chi^2(14) = 16.71$, $p > .05$ for the occurrence of pleasant

**Relationship satisfaction**. The Relationship Satisfaction Scale was developed by Celenk and van de Vijver (2013b; adapted from the Satisfaction with Life Scale, Diener, Emmons, Larson, & Griffin, 1985). The scale had six items (e.g., "In most ways, my relationship is close to ideal") and we asked participants to indicate their level of agreement on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7). Cronbach's alpha coefficients were .93, .91, and .90 for mainstream, non-Western, and Western groups, respectively. Data on relationship satisfaction were obtained from a previous panel wave (http://www.lissdata.nl/).

**Life satisfaction.** The Satisfaction with Life Scale was used to assess general life satisfaction (Diener et al., 1985). This scale included five items (e.g., "I am satisfied with my life"). Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7). Cronbach's alpha coefficients were .87, .88, and .90 for mainstream, non-Western, and Western groups, respectively. Data on life satisfaction were obtained from a previous panel wave (http://www.lissdata.nl/).

**Procedure**

Prior to completion of the online diaries on partner behaviors for 28 consecutive days, participants received a letter with the details of the study. It was mentioned in the letter that each day they would receive an inventory with 20 statements and completion would take five minutes per day. Moreover, they received a filter question in the letter; participants could only complete the diaries if they were 25 years of age or older, involved in a relationship more than five years (either married or not), and that during the period of the diary study they would have regular contact with their partners (84.53% of the participants were living with their partners). Participants who met the criteria and agreed to participate in the study received the online diaries every day from 17:00 hours (the diary of a particular day was available for 24 hours) from May 2012 to June 2012. Before receiving the online diary of a certain day, participants received a reminder email each day. Additionally, participants were paid 75 cents per day for completion of the diary. If they completed the diaries for at least seven days, they received one Euro bonus; they received 2 Euros for completing at least 14 days, 4 Euros for completing at least 21 days, and 7 Euros for completing for the full 28 days. Participants received the diaries in Dutch; original items in English were translated by using a committee approach.



partner behavior (average of number of missing values was 1.92% for four weeks), $\chi^2(14) = 8.50$, $p > .05$ for the occurrence of unpleasant partner behavior (average of number of missing values was 1.92% for four weeks), $\chi^2(16) = 17.22$, $p > .05$ for the evaluation of pleasant partner behavior (average of number of missing values was 2.55% for four weeks), and $\chi^2(28) = 47.87$, $p < .05$ for the evaluation of unpleasant partner behavior (average of number of missing values was 27.08% for four weeks). Global occurrence and evaluation of the pleasantness and unpleasantness were derived from those scores.

## RESULTS

### Ethnic Group Comparisons[4]

We computed separate multivariate analyses of variance for displaying the behaviors (occurrence of the *positive* and *negative partner behaviors*), evaluation of the behaviors (pleasantness of the *positive* and *negative partner behaviors*), and satisfaction (*relationship* and *life satisfaction*). We included ethnic group (mainstream vs. non-Western vs. Western immigrants) as independent variable and age, education, and number of children as covariates as they significantly differed across groups.

**Table 5.2** Estimated Means per Scale and Ethnic Group

| | Ethnic group | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **Mainstream** | **Non-Western** | **Western** |
| Occurrence | | | |
| Positive Partner Behaviors | .57 | .58 | .57 |
| Negative Partner Behaviors | $.11_a$ | $.21_b$ | $.12_a$ |
| Evaluation (Pleasantness) | | | |
| Positive Partner Behaviors | 5.91 | 5.85 | 6.02 |
| Negative Partner Behaviors | 4.17 | 4.12 | 4.32 |
| Satisfaction | | | |
| Relationship Satisfaction | 5.99 | 5.89 | 5.94 |
| Life Satisfaction | 5.12 | 4.80 | 5.04 |

**Note**. Subscripts of estimated marginal means indicate pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni adjustments. Means with different subscripts are significantly different.

The multivariate effect of ethnic group was significant for the occurrence of the behaviors; Wilks' Lambda = .94, $F(4, 688) = 5.00$, $p < .01$, (partial) $\eta^2 = .03$. Univariate analyses showed significant differences across groups only for negative partner behaviors, $F(2, 345) = 8.54$, $p < .001$, (partial) $\eta^2 = .05$. Non-Western immigrants displayed more negative behaviors than Western immigrants and mainstreamers (*RQ1*). However, no significant differences emerged for positive partner behaviors, $F(2, 345) = 1.12$, $p > .05$, (partial) $\eta^2 = .00$ (Means can be seen in Table 5.2). Education had a main effect on the occurrence of negative partner behaviors, $F(1, 345) = 8.59$, $p < .01$, (partial) $\eta^2 = .02$, while age had a main effect on the occurrence of positive partner behaviors, $F(1, 345) = 8.28$, $p < .01$, (partial) $\eta^2 = .02$. Correlations between education and occurrence of negative behaviors and age and occurrence of positive

4 In addition to ethnic group comparisons, we examined the differences between males and females on partner behaviors and satisfaction. Significant differences emerged for the occurrence of positive behaviors; $F(1, 345) = 5.85$, $p < .05$, (partial) $\eta^2 = .02$. Males' perceived their partners to display more positive behaviors ($M = .60$) than females' perception about their partners ($M = .55$). Another difference was on the pleasantness of positive partner behaviors; $F(1, 345) = 6.22$, $p < .05$, (partial) $\eta^2 = .02$. Females were higher on pleasantness of their partners' positive behaviors ($M = 6.02$) compared to males ($M = 5.83$).

behaviors were significant, $r(354) = -.19$, $p < .01$ and $r(362) = -.18$, $p < .01$, respectively. So, more educated participants tended to display fewer negative behaviors and older participants tended to display fewer positive behaviors.

For the evaluation of the behavior (*RQ1)*, we found a non-significant multivariate effect, Wilks' Lambda = .99, $F(4, 688) = 1.08$, $p > .05$, (partial) $\eta^2 = .01$. Regarding the effect of education, significant differences only emerged for the evaluation of negative partner behaviors, $F(1, 345) = 12.50$, $p < .001$, (partial) $\eta^2 = .04$; the correlation between education and evaluation of negative behaviors was negative and significant; $r(354) = -.19$, $p < .01$. Hence, more educated participants evaluated negative behaviors as more unpleasant.

The multivariate effect of group was non-significant for satisfaction (*RQ1)*; Wilks' Lambda = .99, $F(4, 688) = 1.14$, $p > .05$, (partial) $\eta^2 = .01$. However, the effect of education was significant both for relationship satisfaction ($F(1, 345) = 4.16$, $p < .05$, (partial) $\eta^2 = .01$) and life satisfaction, $F(1, 345) = 5.25$, $p < .05$, (partial) $\eta^2 = .01$. Correlations between education and relationship satisfaction and life satisfaction were $r(354) = .14$ ($p < .01$) and $r(354) = .12$ ($p < .05$), respectively. So, more educated participants indicated more satisfaction in their relationships and lives.

To sum up, only one difference emerged between the non-Western and Western immigrant and mainstream groups regarding spousal behavior and satisfaction: Non-Westerners displayed more negative partner behaviors than Western immigrants and mainstreamers. Mainstreamers and Western immigrants were similar in all aspects, namely the occurrence and evaluation of positive and negative behaviors as well as relationship and life satisfaction.



**The Mediation Model**

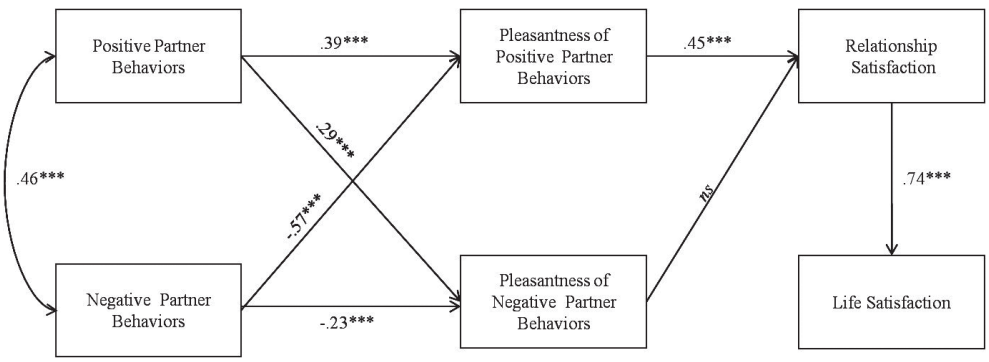
In order to test the degree to which our mediation model is valid across ethnic groups (*RQ2*; see Figure 5.2), we conducted a multigroup analysis in Amos (Arbuckle, 2009). A structural weights model was the most restrictive model with a good fit, $\chi^2(29, N = 362) = 57.82$, $p < .01$, $\chi^2/df = 1.99$, TLI = .91, CFI = .94, RMSEA = .05 (see Table 5.3).

Results revealed that the strongest associations emerged between relationship satisfaction and life satisfaction across all groups (standardized regression weights can be seen in Figure 5.2). Additionally, significant relationships were assessed for all variables except the relationship between the (un)pleasantness of negative partner behaviors and relationship satisfaction. The more partners displayed positive behaviors, the more participants were pleased with both their partners' positive and negative behaviors. Furthermore, the more partners displayed negative behaviors, the less they were pleased with their partners' positive and negative behaviors. Finally, the more participants evaluated their partners' positive behaviors as pleasant, the more they were satisfied with their relationships; the more they were satisfied with their relationships, the more they were satisfied with their lives.

Our mediation model was supported across non-Western and Western immigrants as well as mainstreamers in the Netherlands. Positive behaviors and their evaluation were much more important for relationship and life satisfaction than negative evaluation of partner behaviors. In addition, displaying positive partner behaviors had a positive association with experiencing positive behaviors more positively and was also related to experiencing negative behaviors less negatively. Analogously, displaying more negative partner behaviors was associated with experiencing less pleasantness from that behavior and it also affected the experience of positive partner behaviors.

In sum, both positive and negative partner behaviors were associated with both positive and negative evaluations of those behaviors; positive behaviors were not only related to the evaluation of their own behavior but they also helped to make the evaluation of negative behaviors less negative. The opposite was true for negative behaviors. The evaluation of positive behaviors was related to the positive evaluation of marriages. Finally, positive evaluation of relationships and lives were positively related.

**Figure 5.2** Structural weights model with pleasantness of partner behaviors as mediator for all groups




**Note.** Standardized regression weights are given next to the arrows. $^{***}p < .001$. *ns:* non-significant.

**Table 5.3** Results of the Multigroup Analyses

| | $\chi^2/df$ | CFI | GFI | AGFI | TLI | AIC | RMSEA | $\Delta\chi^2$ | $\Delta df$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (a) | Mediation model of Figure 1 | | | | | | | | |
| Unconstrained | 2.14** | .96 | .97 | .88 | .89 | 128.12 | .06 | - | - |
| *Structural weights* | *1.99*** | *.94* | *.95* | *.90* | *.91* | *125.82* | *.05* | *25.71** | *14* |
| Structural covariances[a] | 4.11*** | .77 | .88 | .78 | .71 | 199.78 | .09 | 85.96*** | 6 |
| Structural residuals[a] | 3.71*** | .73 | .86 | .81 | .74 | 206.20 | .09 | 30.42** | 12 |
| (b) | Latent Growth Curve model of Figure 2 (fluctuations in *displaying* positive and negative behaviors) | | | | | | | | |
| Unconstrained | 3.88*** | .92 | - | - | .92 | 423.75 | .09 | - | - |
| Structural means | 3.91*** | .91 | - | - | .92 | 437.93 | .09 | 26.18*** | 6 |
| *Structural covariances[a]* | *3.97**** | *.90* | - | - | *.91* | *462.88* | *.09* | *44.96**** | *10* |
| Structural residuals[a] | 4.21*** | .88 | - | - | .91 | 509.32 | .10 | 66.44*** | 10 |
| (c) | Latent Growth Curve model of Figure 3 (fluctuations in the *evaluation* of positive and negative behaviors) | | | | | | | | |
| Unconstrained | 2.54*** | .95 | - | - | .95 | 309.73 | .07 | - | - |
| Structural means | 2.47*** | .95 | - | - | .95 | 307.21 | .06 | 9.35 | 6 |
| *Structural covariances[a]* | *2.39**** | *.95* | - | - | *.96* | *303.37* | *.06* | *16.29* | *10* |
| Structural residuals[a] | 2.97*** | .92 | - | - | .94 | 371.70 | .07 | 88.34*** | 10 |

**Note.** [a] Structural covariances is fixing the variance of the factors to be identical across groups, structural residuals refer to error residual variances related to the dependent factors. Most restrictive model with a good fit is printed in italics. $^{*}p < .05$. $^{**}p < .01$. $^{***}p < .001$.



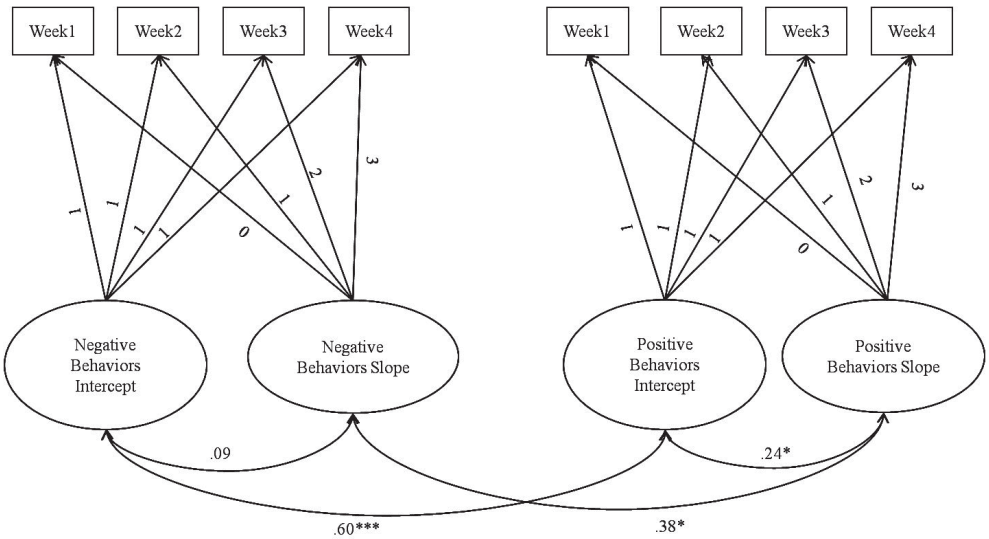
## Weekly Fluctuations in Partner Behaviors

**Fluctuations in the occurrence of behaviors.** For fluctuations in the occurrence of partner behaviors, we computed average frequencies for positive partner behaviors and negative partner behaviors per week. We used a Latent Growth Curve model in Amos (Arbuckle, 2009) to test for partners' score fluctuations on the positive and negative behaviors in Week 1 (average from Day 1 to Day 7), Week 2 (average from Day 8 to Day 14), Week 3 (average from Day 15 to Day 21), and Week 4 (average from Day 22 to Day 28) and their rate of change in displaying positive and negative behaviors from Week 1 to Week 4 (*RQ3;* see Figure 5.3). Intercepts were fixed at 1 for the occurrence of positive and negative behaviors; each path from the unobserved "partner behavior" variable to the observed variables (Week 1, Week 2, Week 3, and Week 4 scores for positive and negative partner behaviors) was constrained to a value of 1. Slopes were fixed at values of 0, 1, 2, and 3 for the occurrence of positive and negative behaviors for Week 1, Week 2, Week 3, and Week 4, respectively; occurrence of positive and negative behaviors was assumed to increase linearly with time for each individual (non-standardized regression coefficients for each parameter for intercept and slope can be seen in Figure 5.3).

Results revealed that the structural covariances model showed a fair fit; $\chi^2(101, N = 362) = 400.88$, $p < .001$, RMSEA = .09, and CFI = .90 (see Table 5.3).

The latent means of the intercepts were higher for positive partner behaviors (.58, $p < .001$) than for negative partner behaviors score (.17, $p < .001$), indicating that partners displayed positive behaviors; about 3.5 times as often as negative partner behaviors. The latent mean of the slopes from Week 1 to Week 4 of positive partner behaviors was non- significant (-.00), whereas average negative partner behaviors decreased slightly and significantly from Week 1 to Week 4 (-.01, $p < .001$).

**Figure 5.3** Conceptual Latent Growth Curve model for all groups for displaying positive and negative partner behaviors




**Note**. Non-standardized regression weights are given next to the single arrows. Double arrows indicate correlations. $^{*}p < .05$. $^{***}p < .001$.

We found significant correlations between the intercept and slope of the positive behaviors ($r = .24$, $p < .05$), between the slopes of the positive and negative behaviors ($r = .38$, $p < .05$), and between the intercepts of the positive and negative behaviors ($r = .60$, $p < .001$). In short, displaying positive behaviors was consistent across the four weeks. However, displaying negative behaviors fluctuated during four weeks across mainstreamers and immigrants in the Netherlands. Additionally, correlations suggested that persons who report many negative behaviors also tend to report many positive behaviors (as evidenced by the positive correlations between the intercepts). Furthermore, participants who report an increase/decrease in positive partner behaviors also tend to see an increase/decrease in negative partner behaviors (correlations between the slopes). Finally, participants who

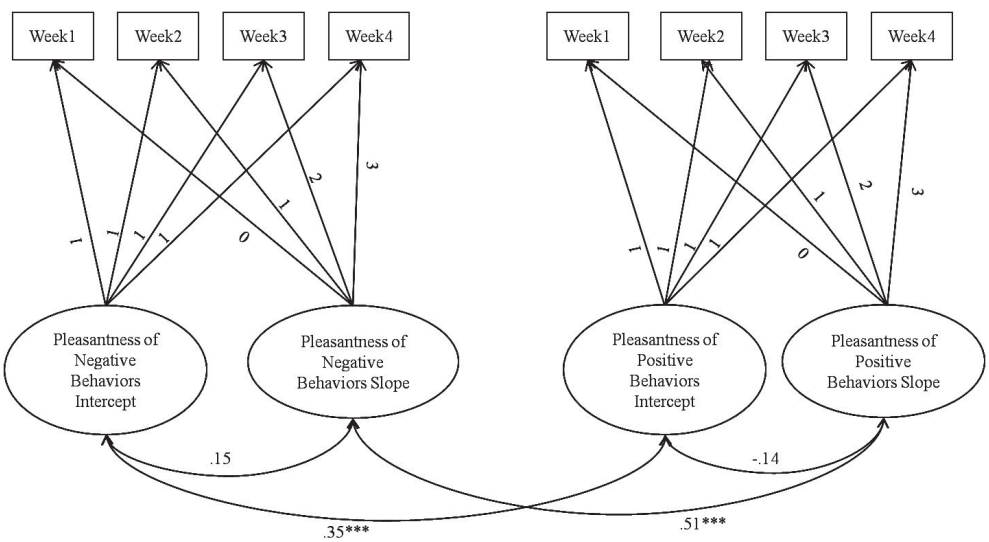
report many positive partner behaviors also report an increase in these positive behaviors (correlations between the intercept and slope for positive behavior).

**Fluctuations in the evaluation of behaviors.** For fluctuations in the evaluation of partner behaviors, we computed average pleasantness of positive and negative behaviors per week (*RQ3;* see Figure 5.4). We used a Latent Growth Curve model in Amos (Arbuckle, 2009) to test for participants' score on the pleasantness of partners' positive and negative behaviors at Week 1(average from Day 1 to Day 7), Week 2 (average from Day 8 to Day 14), Week 3 (average from Day 15 to Day 21), and Week 4 (average from Day 22 to Day 28) and their rate of change in evaluating positive and negative behaviors from Week 1 to Week 4 to assess both the intercepts and slopes, respectively (*RQ3;* see Figure 5.4).

Intercepts were fixed at 1 both for the pleasantness of positive and negative behaviors; each path from the unobserved "partner behavior" variable to the observed variables (Week 1 to Week 4 scores for pleasantness of positive and negative partner behaviors) was constrained to a value of 1. Slopes were fixed at 0, 1, 2, and 3 for the pleasantness of positive and negative behaviors for Week 1, Week 2, Week 3, and Week 4, respectively; evaluation of positive and negative behaviors was assumed to increase linearly with time for each individual (non-standardized regression coefficients for each parameter for intercept and slope can be seen in Figure 5.4).



**Figure 5.4**. Conceptual Latent Growth Curve model for all groups for the evaluation of positive and negative partner behaviors




**Note.** Non-standardized regression weights are given next to the single arrows. Double arrows indicate correlations.
$^{***}p < .001$.

Results of the Latent Growth Curve analysis revealed the structural covariances model to be the most restrictive model with a good fit; $\chi^2(101, N = 362) = 241.37$, $p < .001$, RMSEA = .06, and CFI = .95 (see Table 5.3).

The latent mean of the intercepts of average pleasantness of positive partner behaviors score was higher (5.86, $p < .001$) than the average pleasantness of negative partner behaviors score (4.18, $p < .001$), as could be expected. Regarding the latent mean of the slopes, the change in the strength of pleasantness of positive partner behaviors perceived by the participants was significant and positive from Week 1 to Week 4 (.04, $p < .001$), whereas average pleasantness of negative partner behaviors perceived by the participants remained the same from Week 1 to Week 4 (-.01, *ns*).

Correlations indicated non-significant relationships between the intercept and slope for positive behaviors ($r = -.14$, *ns*) and negative behaviors ($r = .15$, *ns*). Significant relationships emerged between the evaluations of positive and negative behaviors (relationship between the intercepts; $r = .35$, $p < .001$) and between the changes on the evaluations of positive and negative behaviors (relationship between the slopes; $r = .51$, $p < .001$)

In sum, rated pleasantness of partners' positive behaviors fluctuated during four weeks across ethnic groups, but perceived (un)pleasantness of partners' negative behaviors was steady for four weeks. Additionally, the more participants evaluated positive behaviors as pleasant, the more they evaluated negative behaviors as pleasant as well (correlations between the intercepts) and partners who report an increase/decrease in pleasantness of positive partner behaviors also tend to report an increase/decrease in pleasantness of negative partner behaviors (correlations between the slopes).

## DISCUSSION

We did not find group differences in evaluations; however we found differences in behaviors, with non-Western immigrants displaying more negative behaviors. Ethnic group differences in displaying negative behaviors are concordant with the larger power distance and hierarchical structure of non-Western marriages. This hierarchy and inequality are believed to result in displaying more negative behaviors (e.g., dominating the conversation, yelling, humiliating, and getting angry) among non-Western participants compared to their Western counterparts. We conclude that power distance is more effective in explaining cross-cultural differences than other value-related dimensions, such as individualism-collectivism and self-expression-survival.

On the whole, we found substantial ethnic group similarities on the occurrence of positive behavior and evaluation of both positive and negative behaviors. Firstly, ethnic group similarities in displaying and evaluating positive behaviors may be a consequence

of universal aspects of long-term relationships that are based on mutual attraction. In a previous study we found comparable patterns; non-Western Turkish and Turkish-Dutch immigrant couples showed similarities with Dutch mainstream couples on the sense of sharing in marriages (both happiness with marital aspects and spousal values in relation to the sense of sharing; Celenk & van de Vijver, 2013b). Additionally, regardless of the ethnic group, if spouses display negative (e.g., my partner humiliated me) or positive behaviors (e.g., my partner showed appreciation), they are evaluated equally negatively (e.g., I found it unpleasant) or positively (e.g., I found it pleasant). Secondly, these similarities may shed light on the ethnic group similarities on relationship and life satisfaction; ethnic differences in satisfaction are unlikely to be brought by differences in partner behaviors but may be a consequence of confounding variables such as socioeconomic status and education. For instance, our groups were different on education which was also found to be significantly related to both marital and life satisfaction (Fugl-Meyer, Melin, & Fugl-Meyer, 2002; Heaton, 2002). More generally, we found few cross-ethnic differences after correcting for background variables, which suggests that cross-ethnic differences could be easily overrated if confounding sample differences were not accounted for. Such confounds are common in immigrant research as these groups often differ from each other and from mainstreamers in background aspects like education and socioeconomic status. Thirdly, it is important to mention that our sample size was not very large, which may have adversely affected the power to detect group differences. Still, it was also found before that ethnic groups in the Netherlands do not differ very much in their actual behaviors (in marital relationships and in their solidarity behavior towards each other), but they differ more in underlying norms and values (Arends-Toth & van de Vijver, 2008).



**Relationships between Partner Behaviors, Relationship Satisfaction, and Life Satisfaction**

While focusing on partner behaviors and satisfaction, previous studies assumed a similar line of reasoning in which occurrence of the behavior influences the evaluation which then affects general happiness; for instance, marital instability was found to be influenced by both the behavior per se and spouse's perception of that behavior (Matthews, Wickrama, & Conger, 1996). Similarly, partnership, stability, and support among couples added to satisfaction among individuals from the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, and China (Wong & Goodwin, 2009). The link between displaying a particular behavior (e.g., My partner shared his/her happiness with me) and the level of pleasure derived from it (e.g., I found that particular behavior very pleasant) may be understood in terms of the influence of positive and negative events on satisfaction. It was found that there is a positive correlation between positive events and satisfaction and a negative correlation was assessed between negative events and satisfaction (based on daily scores) (Oishi, Diener, Choi, Kim-Prieto, & Choi, 2007). Also, we did not find a contrast effect in our study; individuals who experienced

more positive behaviors did not rate those behaviors as less pleasant because they are used to them.

While concentrating on the direction of the relationships, we established that the more partners display positive behaviors, the more they experience them as pleasant and the less they experience negative behaviors as unpleasant. Similarly, the more they exhibit negative behaviors, the less they experience pleasantness of both positive and negative behaviors. Additionally, there was a positive relationship between pleasantness of positive events and relationship satisfaction and between relationship satisfaction and life satisfaction, which is consistent with previous research (e.g., Celenk & van de Vijver, 2013c). However, the evaluation of negative behaviors was fairly independent of relationship satisfaction. There may also be a dimension of dissatisfaction that is not necessarily the opposite of relationship satisfaction (Celenk & van de Vijver, 2013b). To sum up, perceived positive behaviors make the perception of negative behaviors more positive, and perceived negative behaviors make the perception of positive behaviors less positive, pleasantness of perceived positive behaviors make the marriage more satisfied (not unpleasantness of perceived negative behaviors), and more satisfied relationship makes the life happier.

**Weekly Fluctuations in the Occurrence and Evaluation of Partner Behavior**

It has been argued that positive and negative aspects in relationships are distinct, yet related (Fincham & Linfield, 1997). Gottman and Levenson (1992) found that satisfied couples have an equilibrium in which positive behaviors exceed negative behaviors approximately five times, which is not too far from the 3.5:1 ratio we found. It is apparently not so much the occurrence of negative behaviors as such that matters but more the ratio of positive to negative behaviors. Gottman and Krokoff (1989) also argued that disagreement and exchanges of anger between couples are not destructive in later marital satisfaction. Another explanation could be that positive emotions are felt more than negative emotions across cultures (Diener & Diener, 1996). It is also striking that participants who saw more positive behaviors also reported more negative behaviors which could also be interpreted as a kind of a talkativeness factor that some participants just gave more responses than other participants. In order to examine whether positive correlations between the occurrence of positive and negative behaviors as well as the positive correlation between the evaluation of positive and negative behaviors were due to a method artifact such as response bias, we obtained social desirability scores of participants from a previous panel wave and controlled for its effect on the ethnic group comparisons; all similarities/differences remained the same after the correction, which reduced the possibility of a method artifact.

**Limitations, Suggestions for Future Research, and Conclusion**

Despite the importance of our results, our study has some limitations. The main limitation was related to characteristics of the sample. The Immigrant Panel allows researchers to obtain data from various ethnic groups; yet, we had to combine the groups within the non-Western and Western sample to reach sufficient sample sizes for the analysis. It would be interesting to make within group comparisons (e.g., comparing Turkish and Moroccan immigrants). Another limitation was related to sociodemographic information; we did not obtain information regarding participants' length of relationship and relationship arrangement (i.e., family-initiated vs. couple-initiated), which are presumed to confound with satisfaction. Furthermore, we asked participants to self-report their partners' behavior, which might bias our results; obtaining data from both dyads would increase the validity of our study. Our results firstly showed that positive partner behaviors are more salient and valid in relation to satisfaction across ethnic groups. Secondly, we found that non-Westerners display more behaviors towards each other and they evaluate these more negatively (even though non-significant, non-Westerners displayed more positive behaviors and less pleased with it). Future research should replicate our findings, preferably using observational procedures, and broaden our understanding on the role of ethnicity in close relationships in multicultural societies to shed light to policy makers and researchers**.**

# Chapter 6

## DESTRUCTIVE CONFLICT RESOLUTION, ACCULTURATION ORIENTATIONS, AND RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION AMONG ETHNIC GROUPS IN THE NETHERLANDS

Celenk, O., van de Vijver, F. J. R., & Alonso-Arbiol, I (2013). *Destructive conflict resolution, acculturation orientations, and relationship satisfaction among ethnic groups in the Netherlands*. Manuscript in preparation

No matter how happy you are in a close relationship, at certain moments conflict is inevitable (Canary, Cupach, & Messman, 1995).The strategies partners use (e.g., constructive and destructive) to resolve conflicts in close relationships is associated with their happiness (Fincham, Beach, & Davila, 2004); happier partners use constructive strategies more often. Despite the fact that this association between constructive (e.g., talking, listening), destructive conflict resolution (e.g., yelling, dominating the conversation), and happiness has been tested and supported previously, the extent to which it occurs among different ethnic groups needs further examination. In a previous study, we found that Turkish and Dutch as well as Turkish-Dutch immigrant couples used similar conflict resolution strategies (i.e., approach and withdrawal; Celenk & van de Vijver, 2013a).

In the present chapter, the main objective is to unravel the role of ethnicity in conflict resolution and its association with satisfaction in close relationships. Secondly, we aim at examining the role of acculturation orientations in these aspects among all major immigrant groups in the Netherlands. Acculturation orientations (i.e., cultural maintenance and adoption) among the immigrants are also believed to influence relationship satisfaction (Celenk & van de Vijver, 2013b). We are interested in similarities and differences in destructive conflict resolution and relationship satisfaction among ethnic groups in the Netherlands. For the immigrant groups, the relations between conflict resolution, acculturation orientations, and satisfaction are also examined.

**Destructive Conflict Resolution and Satisfaction in Close Relationships**

Happiness in couple relationships is important as it affects psychological and physical well-being of the partners (Hicks & Diamond, 2008). It has been argued that constructive conflict resolution is positively related to happiness, whereas destructive conflict resolution is negatively associated with happiness (Feeney, 2002).

Research from different perspectives on conflict resolution has identified several strategies to solve arguments. Rahim and Blum (1994) argued that a conflict can be resolved in five different ways: integrating, dominating, compromising, avoiding, and obliging (Rahim, 2002). Furthermore, destructive (e.g., physical, verbal aggression, criticizing, avoiding) and constructive (e.g., listening, compromising, integrating) strategies have often been named in the literature as possible ways couples use to manage their conflicts (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001; Schneewind & Gerhard, 2002; Ting-Toomey et al., 1991).

In the present study, our focus and definition of conflict resolution are based on the typologies considering the reactions of partners to dissatisfaction in couple relationships proposed by Rusbult, Zembrodt, and Gunn (1982). Constructive conflict strategies can be defined as “positive” ways couples use to solve the conflict and finish the discussion. On the other hand, destructive strategies are more “negative” tactics used by couples which are considered as harmful because they do not include the actual goal of solving the conflict

(Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik, & Lipkus, 1991). Rusbult and colleagues (1982) identified four typologies —voice, loyalty, exit, and neglect—along the underlying dimensions of constructiveness and destructiveness. The former two (voice and loyalty) have been considered as constructive ways with the main goal of maintaining the couple relationship by using various strategies, such as discussing and focusing on the problems, talking with friends, and compromising. The latter two (exit and neglect) have been identified as destructive strategies without the real intention of repairing the relationship by avoiding, withdrawing, yelling, being physically aggressive, and leaving the room (for details, see Rusbult, Zembrodt, & Gunn, 1982). It is important to note that the use of "constructive" and "destructive" is not based on couples' consideration or evaluation but rather on their effect on the relationship. For instance, a so-called destructive strategy (e.g., yelling at the partner) may be defined as positive, helpful, and constructive by the person who engages in the behavior; however, these kinds of behaviors have been found to be negatively related to satisfaction (Rusbult et al., 1991). Destructive conflict resolution is associated with more negative partner behavior than constructive conflict resolution is. We found evidence in a previous study for ethnic group differences in negative partner behavior in line with this argument. We found people with a non-Western immigration background displaying more negative partner behaviors than people with a Western immigration origin and mainstream Dutch background (Celenk & van de Vijver, 2013d).

Despite the fact that constructive and destructive dimensions co-exist in a couple relationship, in the present study our focus is only on destructive strategies. The reason is the higher impact of the destructive dimension. It has been observed that there is 5:1 ratio of positive to negative behaviors in couple relationships; in other words, stable and happy relationships can only be achieved by displaying five times more positive than negative behaviors in the relationships (Gottman, 1993; Gottman & Levenson, 1992). Moreover, Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, and Vohs in their review emphasized the salience of "bad" over "good"; in other words, a key to happiness is exhibiting fewer bad behaviors than more good ones. Similarly, Rusbult, Johnson, and Morrow (1986) concluded that destructive behaviors predict distress more strongly than constructive behaviors.



**The role of ethnicity.** It has been argued that ethnicity has an effect on the way individuals deal with conflicts. For instance, Americans were found to be higher on the dominating style compared to Japanese and Koreans, whereas the latter two groups were higher on obliging and avoiding than Americans (Ting-Toomey et al., 1991). Furthermore, Cingoz-Ulu and Lalonde (2007) found Canadians to confront more in a conflict situation than Turks. These cultural/ethnic group differences can be understood in terms of differing culture value orientations.

Power distance and hierarchy may be used as a framework to understand these ethnic group differences. In Western cultures (supposedly more individualistic and affluent; Hofstede, 1991) interpersonal relationships are believed to be based more on equality. Similarly, couple relationships are more equalitarian and mutual, and autonomy is considered as highly important (MacDonald, Marshall, Gere, Shimotomai, & Lies, 2012). In non-Western cultures (presumed to be more collectivistic and less affluent; Hofstede, 1991), interpersonal relationships are shaped more by a larger power distance. Hierarchy has a bearing on couple relationships as males are generally more dominant and relationships are less equal (Celenk & van de Vijver, 2013b). Regarding the destructive conflict resolution, previous research has shown that individuals in collectivistic cultures mostly avoid or withdraw in a conflict situation whereas individuals in individualistic cultures mostly confront or dominate while managing a conflict (Cingoz-Ulu & Lalonde, 2007; Holt & deVore, 2005; Ting-Toomey, 2005; Ting-Toomey et al., 1991). In a cross-cultural study, Thomas and Au (2002) found individuals from Hong Kong (higher on vertical collectivism; Triandis, 1995) to be higher on "neglect" and lower on "loyalty", whereas individuals from New Zealand (higher on horizontal individualism; Triandis, 1995) are higher on "voice". Strategies, such as avoiding, exiting, and neglecting, are preferred more by people in more collectivistic cultures to maintain peace and not to create any conflict in close relationships. People in more individualistic cultures are presumed to hold different strategies, such as dominating and voice, which can be considered as the emphasis on the autonomy and individual gains and goals (Triandis, 1995).

We believe that strategies such as exit and neglect are the destructive replies by the submissive part in a hierarchical relationship (e.g., among females involved in couple relationships with male dominance). The part of the relationship that is higher in power is presumed to show a dominating/voice response (e.g., among males involved in couple relationships with male dominance). In other words, destructive conflict resolution is believed to be more likely among couples who are more dissimilar (unequal) in power.

Therefore, ethnic groups in the Netherlands including mainstream Dutch and individuals with different immigration backgrounds are believed to differ in destructive couple conflict resolution (e.g., neglecting, exiting, and being verbally and physically aggressive). Destructive conflict resolution is claimed to be preferred more by people who are supposedly involved in more hierarchical, male-dominated couple relationships. Destructive conflict management is negatively related to relationship satisfaction, which is believed to be less among dissimilar couples with larger power distance. Similarly, we found marital dissatisfaction to be higher among Turkish-Dutch immigrants than Dutch mainstreamers (Celenk & van de Vijver, 2013b) and satisfaction to be higher among individuals with a Western immigration background compared to individuals with a non-Western immigration background (Celenk & van de Vijver, 2013c).

**Immigration Background in the Netherlands**

In the last century there have been three separate immigrant waves in the Netherlands, each time with different reasons. The first wave mainly involved former colonies of the country; Indonesian (around 1950s), Surinamese, Antillean, and Aruban (around 1965) people migrated to the Netherlands. The second wave was mostly due to employment; Southern European (around 1950s), Turkish, and Moroccan (around 1960s) individuals migrated to the Netherlands. The last wave mainly included political and religious refugees from former East Bloc countries (around 1970s) and Yugoslavia around 1980s (Schalk-Soekar, van de Vijver, & Hoogsteder, 2004). Since the 1980s, the main source of migration has been the family (either as forms of reunification or formation; Celenk & van de Vijver, 2013c).

Individuals with Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese, and Antillean/Aruban background are classified as having a non-Western immigration background. Individuals with an Indonesian background are classified as having a Western immigration background, because members of this group have lived in the Netherlands for a long time and have shown a strong pattern of assimilation (Statistics Netherlands, 2012). Figures of the Statistics Netherlands reveal that approximately 21% of the whole Dutch population has an immigration background. Turkish-Dutch group is the largest group with a non-Western immigration background, followed by individuals with Moroccan-Dutch, Surinamese-Dutch, Antillean-Dutch, and Aruban-Dutch backgrounds, respectively.

Individuals with Turkish and Moroccan background are more similar to each other and the same is true for individuals with Antillean and Surinamese background (van Oudenhoven, Prins, & Buunk, 1998). Furthermore, they perceive more distance from the mainstream Dutch individuals compared to individuals of Antillean and Surinamese background (Schalk-Soekar, van de Vijver, & Hoogsteder, 2004). Similarly, Turkish-Dutch couples were found to prefer cultural maintenance in couple relationships (Celenk & van de Vijver, 2013b; for details of acculturation theory, see Celenk & van de Vijver, 2011).



**The Present Study**

The present study included six ethnic groups (mainstream Dutch and individuals with Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese, Antillean, and Indonesian immigration backgrounds) living in the Netherlands. We examined three distinct aspects: (a) the association of ethnicity with destructive conflict resolution strategies and satisfaction among all groups; (b) the association of gender with these aspects and its interaction with ethnicity; (c) the role of acculturation orientations in relation to destructive conflict resolution and satisfaction among groups with an immigration background.

Regarding the first goal on the role of ethnicity, we hypothesized that:

> *Hypothesis 1:* Destructive conflict resolution is reported more by individuals with a Turkish, Moroccan, Antillean, and Surinamese background compared to individuals

with an Indonesian background and mainstream Dutch.

*Hypothesis 2:* Relationship satisfaction is reported less by individuals with a Turkish, Moroccan, Antillean, and Surinamese background than by individuals with an Indonesian background and mainstream Dutch.

Regarding the second goal on the role of acculturation orientations, we hypothesized that:

*Hypothesis 3:* Destructive conflict is negatively associated with relationship satisfaction and cultural maintenance and adoption are positively related to relationship satisfaction in all groups with an immigration background.

## METHOD

### Sample

The present study included a total of 600 individuals living in the Netherlands. Respondents were members of the Tilburg Immigrant Panel[1] that is based on a stratified random sample of immigrant groups in the Netherlands as well as a random sample of the mainstream group. The panel is an independent part of the LISS panel of the MESS project (Measurement and Experimentation in the Social Sciences; for details of the panel, see Scherpenzeel & Das, 2010). Mainstream (non-immigrant) Dutch group had 391 individuals; there were 29 Turkish-Dutch and 29 Antillean-Dutch individuals, 34 Moroccan-Dutch, and 34 Surinamese-Dutch participants; 83 of the participants were Indonesian-Dutch. Details of the sample can be seen in Table 6.1.

As the sample size per group was not sufficient to make group comparisons and test the relationships across groups, we had to combine certain similar groups in line with the previous literature[2]. We combined people with a Turkish background and Moroccan background and people with Antillean and Surinamese background in order to reach adequate sample sizes (Schalk-Soekar, van de Vijver, & Hoogsteder, 2004).

Results revealed significant group differences for age ($F(3, 596) = 23.08$, $p < .001$, (partial) $\eta^2 = .10$), net family income ($F(3, 544) = 3.07$, $p < .05$, (partial) $\eta^2 = .02$), and education ($\chi^2(15, N = 595) = 40.98$, $p < .001$). Therefore, we controlled for the effect of age, net family income, and education in the analyses including all groups.

1 The immigrant panel data were collected by CentERdata (Tilburg University, The Netherlands) through its MESS project funded by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research.

2 We had four groups: mainstream/non-immigrant Dutch, the Turkish-Moroccan group which was composed of people with Turkish and Moroccan immigration background, the third group were Antillean-Surinamese involving people with Antillean as well as Surinamese background. The final group included participants with an Indonesian background.

## Instruments

**Destructive conflict resolution.** In order to assess destructive conflict resolution, we included four items (scale developed by the authors). Each item started with: After an argument: and continued as "I slam doors or yell", "I leave it to my partner to solve the conflict", "I continue the conflict without listening to my partner", and "I hit, push, or slap occasionally". Participants were asked to indicate their agreement on a 7-point Likert scale from *completely disagree* (1) to *completely agree* (7).

**Table 6.1** Sample Descriptive Statistics per Ethnic Group

| Background | Ethnic Group | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mainstream Dutch | Turkish-Moroccan | Antillean-Surinamese | Indonesian |
| Mean age (years) | 50.03 | 37.05 | 45.40 | 51.31 |
| Percentage of females | 49.11 | 52.38 | 52.38 | 48.19 |
| Mean monthly net family income (Euro) | 3244 | 1840 | 5669 | 4243 |
| Percentage of living with the partner | 96.42 | 90.48 | 79.37 | 87.95 |
| Education[a] | | | | |
| Primary School | 5.37 | 18.97 | 11.11 | 3.61 |
| Lower secondary education | 19.95 | 20.69 | 12.70 | 14.46 |
| Higher secondary education | 10.23 | 12.07 | 1.59 | 15.66 |
| Secondary vocational education | 25.83 | 31.03 | 30.16 | 19.28 |
| Higher vocational education | 24.81 | 13.79 | 30.16 | 24.10 |
| University education | 13.81 | 3.45 | 14.28 | 22.89 |

**Note.** [a]Percentage

**Relationship satisfaction.** The scale to measure relationship satisfaction has already been used in previous studies and it was developed by Celenk and van de Vijver (2013b; adapted from the Satisfaction with Life Scale by Diener, Emmons, Larson, & Griffin, 1985). The measure included six items in order to examine the happiness of the participants in their close relationships. Items were "Overall, I am happy with relationship", "In most ways, my relationship is close to ideal", "I am happy with my nuclear family (children and partner)", "I am happy with my relationship with my children", "I am happy with my relationship with my spouse", and "In most ways, my nuclear family (children and partner) is close to ideal. Each participant evaluated their happiness on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7).

**Acculturation orientations.** Acculturation preferences of the participants with an immigration background were assessed by a shorter version of a scale developed by the authors (Celenk & van de Vijver, 2013b; adapted from Acculturation Orientations Scale,

Galchenko & van de Vijver, 2007). This self-report scale was composed of 12 items to assess cultural maintenance and adoption. Each item started with: I find it important to: and for preference for cultural maintenance; six items continued as "Have close contact with families from my own ethnic group", "Have family relationships as my own ethnic group does", "Have a relationship with my partner as my own ethnic group does", "Raise my children as my own ethnic group does", "Watch my own ethnic group's television channels", "Speak language of my own ethnic group". For preference for cultural adoption; they were "Have close contact with Dutch mainstream families", "Have family relationships as Dutch mainstreamers do", "Have a relationship with my partner as Dutch mainstreamers do", "Raise my children as Dutch mainstreamers do", "Watch Dutch television channels", and "Speak Dutch".

**Procedure**

Members of the Tilburg Immigrant Panel completed the questionnaires online by logging in to their panel accounts. All participants were either married (81.67%) or involved in a relationship longer than five years (18.33%). All the scales were developed in English and were translated to Dutch by using a committee approach. As panel members complete questionnaires on various topics each month; the time needed to complete a questionnaire is approximately 15 minutes per month.

## RESULTS

### Psychometric Properties

**Internal consistencies of the scales.** Cronbach's alpha values are presented in Table 6.2. As can be seen there, these values were mostly adequate (except for destructive conflict resolution in the Antillean-Surinamese and Indonesian groups, which were just below the threshold value of .70; Cicchetti, 1994).

**Table 6.2** Internal Consistencies per Ethnic Group

| | Ethnic Group | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Scale | Mainstream Dutch | Turkish-Moroccan | Antillean-Surinamese | Indonesian |
| Destructive Conflict Resolution | .70 | .73 | .67 | .65 |
| Relationship Satisfaction | .92 | .95 | .92 | .90 |
| Cultural Maintenance | - | .81 | .82 | .89 |
| Cultural Adoption | - | .73 | .71 | .86 |

**Missing value analysis.** In order to replace the missing values in the data, we computed Missing value analysis in SPSS19 separately for destructive conflict resolution, satisfaction, and acculturation orientations. Results revealed that the average of missing values for destructive conflict resolution was 7.75%, it was 6.57% for satisfaction, 14.47% for cultural adoption, and 18.08% for cultural maintenance. Results of the Little's MCAR test were $\chi^2(20) = 29.18$, $p > .05$ for destructive conflict resolution, $\chi^2(33) = 28.44$, $p > .05$ for satisfaction, and $\chi^2(252) = 308.96$, $p < .001$ for acculturation orientations (only for groups with an immigration background). Results for acculturation orientations revealed that missing values were not completely at random. However, percentages of the missing values were not very high; therefore we replaced them and included the scales in the analyses. For all scales, the EM algorithm was used.

**Table 6.3** Measurement Invariance of the Scales: Measurement Weights and Intercept Invariance

| Scale | Invariance | $\chi^2/df$ | TLI | CFI | RMSEA | AIC | BCC |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Destructive Conflict | MW | 2.49** | .93 | .95 | .05 | 120.33 | 125.70 |
| | Intercepts | 2.06** | .95 | .94 | .04 | 113.80 | 117.52 |
| Satisfaction | MW | 5.91*** | .92 | .95 | .09 | 368.39 | 381.81 |
| | Intercepts | 4.34*** | .94 | .95 | .08 | 349.52 | 359.44 |
| Acculturation Orientations Cultural Maintenance | MW | 3.21*** | .85 | .88 | .10 | 204.47 | 215.17 |
| | Intercepts | 3.37*** | .84 | .84 | .11 | 223.48 | 231.85 |
| Acculturation Orientations Cultural Adoption | MW | 3.26*** | .78 | .85 | .11 | 202.46 | 213.86 |
| | Intercepts | 3.52*** | .76 | .77 | .11 | 226.02 | 235.09 |

**Note.** TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index. CFI = Comparative Fit Index. RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation. AIC = Akaike Information Criterion. BCC = Browne-Cudeck Criterion. MW = Measurement Weights. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

**Invariance of the scales.** We computed confirmatory factor analysis to test the equivalence of the construct (structural equivalence) as well as to identify whether they are on the same scale in each ethnic group (scalar equivalence; for details of the equivalence, see van de Vijver and Leung, 1997). For the destructive conflict and satisfaction scales, measurement weights were invariant and the drop from weights to intercepts was not substantial, which supported both structural and scalar equivalence. However, this level of invariance could not be found for the acculturation orientations measures. The poor fit of the metric and scalar inequivalence probably resulted from the small sample size, as for the acculturation orientations, we could only include the groups with an immigration background; as a consequence, the data did not comply with the rule of thumb that for every estimated parameter (between 20 and 30 depending on the invariance model), there should be 10 observations. Therefore, we also computed a principal component analysis in SPSS19 to identify the factorial structure of the scales. Scree tests confirmed that all scales were unifactorial. For the acculturation orientations among people with an immigration background, the cultural maintenance factor explained 58.02% of the total variance and the

cultural adoption factor explained 47.62%. All factor loadings were higher than .45, which is considered to be adequate by common standards (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

Then, in order to examine the equivalence of the acculturation orientations scales included in the present study, we computed Tucker's phi values based on the factor loadings we obtained in Principal Component Analysis (values above .90 is considered as being structurally equivalent). All the Tucker's phi values were higher than .90 across the groups, which support the structural equivalence all scales (van de Vijver & Leung, 1997).

**Ethnic Group Similarities and Differences**

To test the hypotheses on ethnic group similarities and differences and the interaction with gender, we computed separate multivariate analysis of covariance. Ethnic group (Mainstream Dutch vs. Turkish-Moroccan vs. Surinamese-Antillean vs. Indonesian) and gender (male vs. female) were the independent variables. We included four items of the destructive conflict resolution scale as well as the single construct, which was the average of the four items (first analysis), and six items of the satisfaction scale as well as the single satisfaction construct that was the average of the six items (second analysis) as the separate dependent variables. A single factor was extracted for age, education, and net family income and included as a covariate.

We found a significant multivariate main effect of ethnic group for destructive conflict resolution (four items and the average score as an approximation of the construct score), Wilks' Lambda= .96, $F(12, 1408) = 1.83$, $p < .05$, (partial) $\eta^2 = .01$. While focusing on the univariate effects, three items were significantly different across groups (or bordered on significance); leaving it to the partner to solve the argument, $F(3, 535) = 2.54$, $p = .06$, (partial) $\eta^2 = .01$ (Turkish-Moroccan group scored higher than the mainstream Dutch group); continuing the argument without listening the spouse, $F(3, 535) = 3.16$, $p < .05$, (partial) $\eta^2 = .02$ (Turkish-Moroccan group scored higher than mainstream Dutch and Antillean-Surinamese groups, respectively), and hitting, pushing, and slapping occasionally; $F(3, 535) = 2.69$, $p < .05$, (partial) $\eta^2 = .02$ (Turkish-Moroccan group was higher than the mainstream Dutch). Only the item "slamming the doors and yelling" yielded nonsignificant results, $F(3, 535) = .05$, $p > .05$, (partial) $\eta^2 = .00$, The univariate effect of destructive conflict as a single construct (average of the four items) was marginally different across groups; $F(3, 535) = 2.54$, $p = .06$, (partial) $\eta^2 = .01$. *Hypothesis 1* was partially supported as overall destructive conflict was significantly different across the groups; yet, the only difference was between the mainstream Dutch and Turkish-Moroccan immigrant groups as the latter being higher than the former (see Table 6.4).

The multivariate main effect for satisfaction was nonsignificant (for six items and the average score as an approximation of the construct score) of the scale, Wilks' Lambda= .96, $F(18, 1500) = 1.20$, $p > .05$, (partial) $\eta^2 = .01$. All of the univariate effects were nonsignificant

except "Overall, I am happy with my relationship", $F(3, 535) = 2.77$, $p < .05$, (partial) $\eta^2 = .02$. Therefore, *Hypothesis 2* was rejected (see Table 6.4).

The multivariate effect of gender on destructive conflict resolution was significant, Wilks' Lambda = .98, $F(4, 532) = 2.89$, $p < .05$, (partial) $\eta^2 = .02$ as well as all the univariate effects except leaving the argument to the partner, $F(1, 535) = .01$, $p > .05$, (partial) $\eta^2 = .00$. Overall, females scored higher than males on all items. The multivariate effect of gender on satisfaction items was also significant, Wilks' Lambda= .97, $F(6, 530) = 3.08$, $p < .01$, (partial) $\eta^2 = .03$; there was only one significant univariate effect: being happy with the relationship with children, $F(1, 535) = 4.68$, $p < .05$, (partial) $\eta^2 = .01$.

Regarding the interactions between ethnicity and gender the only significant univariate effect was "continuing the argument without listening to the spouse", $F(3, 535) = 2.85$, $p < .05$, (partial) $\eta^2 = .02$.

**Table 6.4** Estimated Marginal Means per Subscale for Ethnic Group

| | Ethnic group | | | | Gender | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mainstream Dutch | Turkish-Moroccan | Antillean-Surinamese | Indonesian | Males | Females |
| *Destructive Conflict Resolution* | $2.23_{a}$ | $2.61_{b}$ | $2.16_{a,b}$ | $2.27_{a,b}$ | $2.19_{a}$ | $2.45_{b}$ |
| Slamming or yelling | 2.52 | 2.55 | 2.53 | 2.59 | $2.38_{a}$ | $2.73_{b}$ |
| Leaving solution to the partner | $2.63_{a}$ | $3.19_{b}$ | $2.54_{a,b}$ | $2.61_{a,b}$ | 2.73 | 2.75 |
| Continuing without listening | $2.30_{a}$ | $2.83_{b}$ | $2.12_{a}$ | $2.32_{a,b}$ | $2.18_{a}$ | $2.61_{b}$ |
| Hitting, pushing, slapping | $1.48_{a}$ | $1.88_{b}$ | $1.45_{a,b}$ | $1.54_{a,b}$ | $1.47_{a}$ | $1.71_{b}$ |
| *Relationship Satisfaction* | 5.87 | 5.68 | 5.87 | 6.06 | 5.86 | 5.89 |
| Being happy with the relationship | $5.97_{a,b}$ | $5.65_{a}$ | $6.08_{a,b}$ | $6.17_{b}$ | 5.99 | 5.95 |
| Relationship close to ideal | 5.48 | 5.32 | 5.50 | 5.75 | 5.46 | 5.56 |
| Being happy with nuclear family | 6.08 | 5.81 | 6.10 | 6.21 | 6.05 | 6.05 |
| Being happy with relationship with children | 6.09 | 5.96 | 5.96 | 6.22 | $5.94_{a}$ | $6.18_{b}$ |
| Being happy with the relationship with partner | 5.97 | 5.73 | 6.02 | 6.18 | 5.97 | 5.97 |
| In most case. my nuclear family is close to ideal | 5.65 | 5.61 | 5.58 | 5.85 | 5.72 | 5.63 |

**Note.** Means with different subscripts are significantly different (Bonferroni adjustments were used for pairwise comparisons).

### Relationships between Destructive Conflict Resolution, Acculturation Orientations, and Satisfaction (for immigrant groups)

In order to examine the relationships between destructive conflict resolution, acculturation orientations, and satisfaction for participants with an immigration background, we computed a multigroup analysis in Amos (Arbuckle, 2009). We tested a model in which destructive conflict and acculturation orientations predicted satisfaction for all immigrant groups (See Figure 6.1).

We first computed a structural weights model in which regression coefficients were identical across groups. The model had a poor fit (See Table 6.5). Based on an analysis of modification indices, we computed a partial structural weights model in which regression coefficients were identical for destructive conflict resolution across the groups; however, for the acculturation orientations coefficients were only invariant among Antillean-Surinamese and Indonesian groups. Results of the partial structural weights model showed a good fit; $\chi^2(4, N = 209) = 2.25$, $p > .05$, $\chi^2/df = .56$, TLI = 1.19, CFI = 1.00, RMSEA = .00 (see Table 6.5).

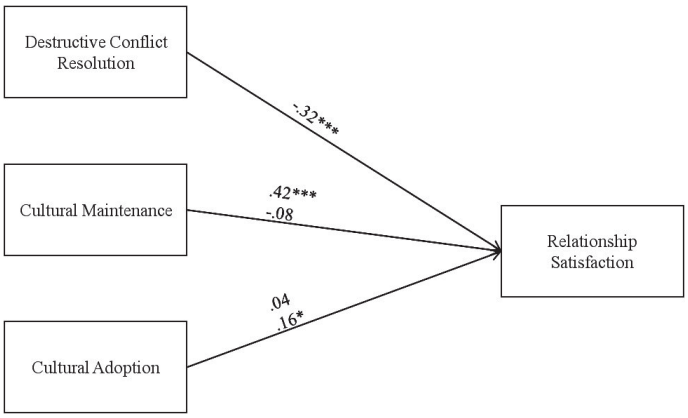
In line with our expectation (*Hypothesis 3*), there was a significant negative relationship between destructive conflict resolution and satisfaction for all groups. However, for cultural maintenance and satisfaction the only significant and positive relationship was found for participants with Turkish-Moroccan background. For cultural adoption, significant positive relationships between satisfaction and adoption were only found for participants with Antillean-Surinamese and Indonesian backgrounds, the groups that are more adjusted to the Dutch society. In sum, the salience of the effect of destructive conflict resolution on satisfaction was identical across the groups; however, the impact of cultural maintenance on satisfaction was more salient among the participants with Turkish-Moroccan background compared to the participants with Antillean-Surinamese and Indonesian background. Nevertheless, the influence of cultural adoption on satisfaction was stronger for participants with Antillean-Surinamese and Indonesian background than their participants in the Turkish-Moroccan group. Therefore, *Hypothesis 3* was partially confirmed.

**Table 6.5** Results of the Multigroup Analysis

| | $\chi^2/df$ | CFI | GFI | AGFI | TLI | RMSEA | $\Delta\chi^2$ | $\Delta df$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Structural weights | 2.43* | .79 | .97 | .84 | .37 | .08 | 14.58* | 6 |
| *Partial structural weights* | *.56* | *1.00* | *1.00* | *.96* | *1.19* | *.00* | *2.25* | *4* |
| Structural covariances[a] | 1.46 | .80 | .94 | .90 | .80 | .05 | 11.66 | 12 |
| Structural residuals[a] | 1.46 | .78 | .93 | .90 | .80 | .05 | 14.68 | 14 |

**Note.** [a] The structural covariances constraints the variance of the factors to be identical across groups, structural residuals refer to error residual variances related to the dependent factors. Most restrictive model with a good fit is printed in italics. *$p < .05$.

**Figure 6.1** Partial structural weights model with satisfaction as outcome for all immigrant groups




**Note.** Standardized regression coefficients are given next to the arrows. Arrows with one number denote parameters that are identical for each group; arrows with two numbers present parameters for Turkish-Moroccan (the coefficient above) and the average of Antillean-Surinamese and Indonesian groups (the coefficient below), respectively. $^{*}p < .05$. $^{***}p < .001$.

## DISCUSSION



In the present study, we focused on three aspects in couple relationships. Firstly, we examined the relationships between destructive conflict resolution, acculturation orientations, and relationship satisfaction among individuals with an immigration background (i.e., Turkish, Moroccan, Antillean, Surinamese, and Indonesian) living in the Netherlands. Secondly, we addressed the extent to which destructive conflict resolution and satisfaction show similarities and differences across individuals with an immigration background and mainstream Dutch living in the Netherlands. Finally, we examined the extent to which ethnic group differences and similarities interact with gender differences and similarities among these groups.

### Destructive Conflict Resolution, Acculturation Orientations, and Satisfaction

**Ethnic group similarities and differences.** Results of the study revealed that while controlling for age, education, and income, overall (multivariate effects) groups were different in destructive conflict resolution and similar in satisfaction. Destructive conflict resolution in couple relationships was assessed by focusing on exiting (e.g., leaving it to the partner to solve the conflict), neglecting (e.g., continuing the argument without listening to the partner), and being physically and verbally aggressive (e.g., slamming, yelling, hitting,

pushing). While concentrating on each item and their average as a single construct (e.g., destructive conflict resolution and individual four items), we found that the similarity was related to an item which can be considered as the only item that does not involve the other party; the partner (i.e., slamming the doors and yelling). All the other items (i.e., leaving the argument to the partner, continuing without listening the partner, hitting, pushing the partner) included the involvement of the partner. Therefore, our study supports the idea that cultural value dimensions (individualism-collectivism, power distance) are more salient in understanding destructive conflict resolution strategies across ethnic groups when these strategies include both dyads and when the resolution is believed to be reached through the partner.

The main group differences were between mainstream Dutch and immigrants with Turkish and Moroccan origin. The only difference between the Turkish-Moroccan group and Antillean-Surinamese group was on "continue the argument without listening to the partner", in which the former scored higher than the latter. Mainstream Dutch and people with Antillean-Surinamese and Indonesian immigration backgrounds were similar in all items. These differences and similarities could be related to cultural distance of the ethnic groups to the Dutch mainstream group; the largest differences are mostly obtained for the groups that perceive the largest cultural distance to the ethnic Dutch group (e.g., Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch). For instance, it has been argued that immigrants with a Turkish and Moroccan background perceive a larger distance to the ethnic Dutch than immigrants with Antillean and Surinamese backgrounds (Schalk-Soekar, van de Vijver, & Hoogsteder, 2004). Furthermore, Turkish and Moroccan immigrants migrated for employment reasons whereas Antillean and Surinamese immigrants come from former colonies where encounters with the Dutch language and culture are common.

Similarities in relationship satisfaction are relatively in line with previous studies in which we did not find any differences among the ethnic groups in the Netherlands regarding relationship satisfaction (Celenk & van de Vijver, 2013d). Firstly, our results indicated that group differences in destructive conflict resolution are not associated with similar group differences in satisfaction; ethnic group differences obtained in destructive conflict resolution (multivariate and fewer univariate differences) were not obtained in satisfaction. This suggests that individual and group differences in both constructs do not have the same meaning. There may be two explanations for this discrepancy. Kelley and Burgoon (1991) concluded that marital satisfaction is predicted by the inconsistency between expectation and perception (what you expect from your partner and how you perceive your partner's behavior). It may well be that expectations vis-à-vis relationship satisfaction are lower in groups with more arranged (family-initiated) marriages (the Turkish- and Moroccan-Dutch groups). Therefore, the point of reference (what does it mean to be high or low in marital satisfaction) may be different across groups. A second issue involves ceiling effects;

participants in all groups had the tendency to score towards the extreme of the satisfaction scale (7 point), which may have reduced the power of the statistical analyses to identify group differences.

As an aside, it may be noted that more educated couples have more equalitarian relationships and that presumed cross-cultural differences in hierarchy largely reside in differences in educational levels. It could also be argued that our findings are contaminated by response styles. VanLear (1990) concluded that the relationships between sharing, satisfaction, and traditionalism might have been expanded by social desirability bias. After controlling for this bias, the differences on satisfaction disappeared among couples named as "independent" and "traditional". In order to test the associations between social desirability bias and destructive conflict management and satisfaction, we obtained social desirability scores from a previous panel wave and computed correlation analyses. Results revealed significant positive correlations between social desirability and satisfaction and negative relationships between social desirability and destructive conflict resolution.

**Gender similarities and differences.** While concentrating on the differences and similarities between males and females on destructive conflict management, and satisfaction, the only difference between the sexes was on destructive conflict resolution; females reported using more destructive conflict resolution than males. Firstly, we recomputed the analysis on the item level and found that females indicated more "slamming the doors, yelling, hitting, pushing, continuing the argument without listening their partner", whereas both males and females indicated similar levels of "leaving it to the partner to solve the argument". Even though the items we used in the present study cannot be classified as assessing "demanding" or "withdrawing" patterns during conflict, our results are partially in line with previous research which has concluded that males withdraw and females demand more during conflict in couple relationships (Christensen, Eldridge, Catta-Preta, Lim, & Santagata, 2006). Although we did not find any differences on the withdrawing pattern "leaving the argument to the partner", females' higher scores on "being actively and aggressively involved in the argument" may be understood in terms of their "demand" to discuss and resolve the argument.



Apart from destructive conflict resolution, males and females reported similar levels of satisfaction (except happiness with the relationship with children). Hyde (2005), in her meta-analysis, concluded that males and females are more similar than different on most of the psychological variables (named as the gender similarities hypothesis). Likewise, in a previous study we found males and females to report similar levels of satisfaction in their couple relationships (Celenk & van de Vijver, 2013d). In a study by Schulz, Cowan, Cowan, and Brennan (2004), spouses did not differ on their "typical" behavior either.

**Relationships among individuals with an immigration background.** In order to assess the associations between destructive conflict resolution, acculturation orientations (i.e., cultural maintenance and adoption), and relationship satisfaction among immigrant groups in the Netherlands, we computed a multigroup analysis. We found that groups are invariant regarding the effect of destructive conflict management on satisfaction. More specifically, destructive conflict resolution was negatively related to satisfaction in all groups. Previous studies have reported similar results (e.g., Papp, Kouros, & Cummings, 2009). In addition, we were interested in the role of cultural maintenance and cultural adoption in relationship satisfaction. Cultural maintenance was only salient for satisfaction among the Turkish-Moroccan group and it was unrelated among participants with Antillean-Surinamese and Indonesian backgrounds. On the other hand, the salience of cultural adoption varied among the groups as well in the sense that cultural adoption was positively related to satisfaction but this relationship only existed among Antillean-Surinamese and Indonesian groups. The salience of the relationships is quite in line with the acculturation literature. Firstly, in a previous study we found a similar pattern in the sense that acculturation preferences do not mirror each other (Berry, 1992; Celenk & van de Vijver, 2013b). Cultural maintenance has been found to be more important in relation to marriage-related dynamics compared to cultural adoption among Turkish-Dutch immigrant couples (Celenk & van de Vijver, 2013b). Our results take this finding a step further and supported the salience of cultural adoption among Antillean-Surinamese and Indonesian immigrants. In other words, while there is a preference for maintaining the ethnic culture among the Turkish-Moroccan immigrant group and it more strongly relates to satisfaction among this group than Antillean-Surinamese and Indonesian immigrants, a different pattern occurs for the latter groups; cultural adoption is more important in relation to satisfaction than cultural maintenance among Antillean-Surinamese and Indonesians compared to Turkish-Moroccan immigrants.

**Implications, Limitations, and Conclusion**

Our study has limitations. Firstly, our study design included self-report data on couple relationships and acculturation preferences which are known to be subject to response bias (Paulhus, 1991). Secondly, panel members have limited time to complete the questionnaires. Therefore, each construct was measured by only a few items. We believe measuring destructive conflict resolution by including four items makes it difficult to generalize our findings, which may have caused the lower reliabilities for two ethnic groups; further studies should consider developing a longer scale of destructive conflict resolution. Our sample size per group (e.g., 29 individuals with Turkish and with Antillean origins) did not allow us to focus each group separately, instead we had to combine ethnic groups (i.e., Turkish and Moroccan, Antillean and Surinamese) to reach sufficient sample sizes, which questions the generalizability of the findings. Similarly, immigrant groups were too small to examine

generation differences. In addition, ethnic groups differed on certain background variables and we controlled for these differences (i.e., age, education, and income). However, additional background variables (e.g., length of the relationship) might have an effect in our results which can be included in future studies. We suggest replicating our findings by focusing on the role of generational status as well as ethnicity.

Despite these limitations, we believe that our study has both theoretical and practical implications. More groups were studied than in earlier couple studies that addressed Moroccan and Turkish immigrants; the present research has taken into account all major immigrant groups in the Netherlands, which includes both immigrants with a Western and non-Western origin. Multiculturalism has been one of the leading topics among counseling researchers as well as practitioners and previous research has appreciated the sensitivity to and awareness of cross-cultural differences and similarities. Yet, most research was conducted in the United States and mainly focused on various groups living in the United States (e.g., Pardo, Weisfeld, Hill, & Slatcher, 2013). We found that relationship satisfaction could be enhanced by emphasizing the reduction of destructive conflict resolution strategies to the extent possible. The mechanism seems to be applicable in various ethnic groups. Yet, the influence of cultural maintenance on satisfaction was more salient among immigrants with a Turkish and Moroccan backgrounds compared to individuals with Antillean, Surinamese, and Indonesian backgrounds. The general theme behind these findings seems to be that it is important to link to the dominant ethnic identity of the group, which could involve either the immigrant ethnicity or the mainstream ethnicity.



In conclusion, we believe our results will shed light on how to proceed and will give clues to policy makers as well as counselors in multicultural societies. The present study points out the core dimensions in destructive conflict resolution and satisfaction across different ethnic groups as well as the applicability (destructive conflict resolution to satisfaction) and the variance (in acculturation preferences) of these associations among groups with an immigration background living in the Netherlands. Indeed, this provides a valuable starting point for professionals working towards improving relation satisfaction of couples of different ethnic backgrounds.

# Chapter 7

## GENERAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The starting point of this thesis was mainly my curiosity, more specifically I had numerous questions in my mind related to couple relationships: Does everything revolve around the couple, is it all about the couples, and does the couple have the "perfect" relationship? What about the parents, in-laws, other couples, and neighbors? And are all these shaped to an extent by cultural values, beliefs, and understandings? Mostly stemming from these questions, I examined two main points in relation to couple relationships in the present thesis: the role of culture/ethnicity as well as the role of psychological acculturation. More specifically, there were four main questions to address:

1. What are the similarities and differences (if there are any) among couples living in Turkey and the Netherlands in relation to numerous couple-related dynamics?
2. Are couples with an immigration background more similar to the couples from the ethnic culture or they are more similar to the couples from the majority (host) culture?
3. Are couples with a Western and non-Western immigration background similar to each other and different from the couples from the majority (host) culture?
4. What are the relationships between couple-related dynamics and do these relationships occur similarly among several cultural or ethnic groups?

I believe that the most general conclusion of this thesis is that Turkish and Dutch couples as well as the couples with an immigration background living in the Netherlands are neither very different nor entirely similar in relation to various positive and negative couple-related dynamics. Also, couples with an immigration background (Turkish-Dutch) are more similar to the couples from their country of origin (Turkish) than from the majority members (Dutch). Finally, relationships among couple-related dynamics hold relatively similarly across ethnic groups included in the study (among Turkish and Dutch as well as among ethnic groups living in the Netherlands). In this chapter, I discuss the details of all these findings with possible explanations as well as the implications with suggestions for future research.

**Overview of the Findings**

In *Chapter 2*, Turkish, Turkish-Dutch, and Dutch married dyads were interviewed about positive and negative characteristics of marriages, determinants of marital (dis)satisfaction, spousal communication, sources of conflict, conflict resolution management, and roles.

In Chapter 3, happiness with and values on the sense of security and sharing, sources of conflict, and (dis)satisfaction were examined among Turkish, Turkish-Dutch, and Dutch married couples. Additionally, Turkish-Dutch dyads self-reported their preference for cultural maintenance, cultural adoption, sociocultural competence in the ethnic culture as well as the mainstream culture, and well-being to assess several acculturation-related dynamics and their relation to couple-related aspects.

*Chapter 4, 5, and 6* all focused on ethnic groups living in the Netherlands. The main

focus of *Chapter 4* was the examination of distal to proximal predictors of satisfaction (i.e., marital and life) as well as the antecedent role of perceived discrimination and identity (i.e., ethnic and mainstream). In *Chapter 5*, the perceived display of positive and negative partner behaviors as well as their evaluations was examined in relation to satisfaction (i.e., relationship and life). In the last empirical study, *Chapter 6*, the main interest was on destructive conflict management, satisfaction, as well as acculturation orientations.

In Table 7.1, all main findings are presented per study. The left column in the Table focuses on similarities and differences across groups in relation to couple-related and acculturation-related dynamics and the right column summarizes the findings regarding the associations between couple-related dynamics across groups.

**Table 7.1** Summary of the Main Findings

| Similarities and Differences across Groups |
|---|
| *Chapter 2:* Multivariate effects showed differences for all marital dynamics except conflict resolution strategies. However, univariate effects were few: Turkish and Turkish-Dutch couples were more similar to each other and different from Dutch couples in relation to children related and economical aspects. The latter group put more emphasis on spouse-related aspects, emotional sharing, psychological roles, and reciprocity.<br>*Chapter 3:* After controlling for SES, length of marriage, and number of children multivariate effects were different for happiness with marital aspects, spousal values, sources of conflict, and satisfaction. Yet, univariate effects revealed that Turkish (and Turkish-Dutch couples) emphasized sense of security in relation to happiness with and values of the sense of security, they named both internal and external sources of conflict, and were higher on dissatisfaction than Dutch couples. All the dyadic multivariate effects were non-significant. Only univariate differences emerged for the sense of sharing regarding happiness with and internal sources of marital conflict that wives self reported more than husbands.<br>*Chapter 4:* Mainstream Dutch and immigrants with a Western background were lower on traditional spousal beliefs and attitudes and higher on harmonious spousal attitudes than immigrants with a non-Western origin (age, number of children, and education were controlled for). Among the immigrant groups, immigrants with a Western background scored higher on satisfaction and mainstream identity and lower on perceived discrimination compared to immigrants with a non-Western background (while controlling for age, number of children, education, and generational status).<br>*Chapter 5:* Overall evaluation of partner behaviors and satisfaction (i.e., relationship and life) were similar across mainstream Dutch and immigrants with Western and non-Western origins and overall occurrence of partner behavior was different among the groups (age, education, and number of children were controlled for). While focusing on each variable, groups were similar on all domains except perceived occurrence of negative partner behavior; immigrants with a non-Western origin scored higher than mainstream Dutch and immigrants with a Western origin.<br>*Chapter 6:* After controlling for age, education, and income ethnic groups in the Netherlands differed on destructive conflict resolution but not satisfaction. More specifically, main differences emerged between mainstream Dutch and immigrants with Turkish and Moroccan backgrounds as the former group indicated less use of destructive conflict management (i.e., hitting, pushing, slapping, leaving the argument to the partner, and continuing the argument without listening to the partner). Regarding satisfaction, immigrants with an Indonesian background indicated more happiness with their relationship compared to Turkish-Moroccan immigrants. Regarding the effect of sex, differences were assessed both for destructive conflict management (except leaving the argument to the partner) and satisfaction (only for the happiness with the relationship with children): females scored higher than males. |

## Relationships among Dynamics

*Chapter 3:* Actor effects (e.g., husbands' happiness with marital aspects and values to husbands' satisfaction, wives' marital conflict to wives' marital dissatisfaction) were more salient than partner effects (e.g., husbands' happiness with marital aspects and values to wives' satisfaction). While focusing on the actor effects, Turkish-Dutch couples indicated stronger relationships between happiness with and values of security and sharing and satisfaction for both wives and husbands and between sources of marital conflict to dissatisfaction for both wives and husbands than Turkish and Dutch couples. However, they indicated weaker associations between wives' sources of conflict to wives' satisfaction. All partner effects were similar across the cultural groups; yet, significant relationships were between wives' happiness with and values of security and sharing and husbands' satisfaction, husbands' sources of conflict and wives' dissatisfaction and wives' sources of conflict and husbands' satisfaction. Regarding the dynamics of acculturation, the main relationships were between marital dynamics and cultural maintenance (except sources of conflict), and between marital dynamics and sociocultural competence in the ethnic culture (except happiness with the sense of security and sharing), and between marital dynamics and well-being (except sources of marital conflict).

*Chapter 4:* Harmonious spousal normative beliefs and attitudes predicted marital satisfaction which then influenced life satisfaction similarly in all groups. The influence of attitudes was more salient than normative beliefs. While focusing on the groups with an immigration background, ethnic identity and perceived discrimination positively predicted traditional normative beliefs. Ethnic identity also positively predicted traditional attitudes and negatively predicted harmonious attitudes.

Harmonious attitudes then positively predicted marital satisfaction which in turn positively affected life satisfaction for all groups with an immigration background. Harmonious attitudes and marital satisfaction showed the strongest associations.

*Chapter 5:* For all groups, relationships between the occurrence of positive and negative behaviors and relationship and life satisfaction were significant except for the relationship between the evaluation of negative behaviors and relationship satisfaction. Both the occurrence and evaluation of positive behaviors were more salient than the evaluation and occurrence of negative behaviors. The strongest relationships were between relationship and life satisfaction. While focusing on the fluctuations during the 28 days, displaying negative behaviors decreased from Week 1 to Week 4 and change in the occurrence of positive behaviors was positively correlated with the change in the occurrence of negative behaviors. Positive evaluation of positive behaviors increased from Week 1 to Week 4 and positive evaluation of positive and negative behaviors were positively related as well as the positive association between the change in the evaluation of positive and change in the evaluation of negative behaviors for all groups.

*Chapter 6:* Ethnic groups were similar in relation to the negative association between destructive conflict resolution and relationship satisfaction. However, cultural maintenance was more strongly (and positively) related to satisfaction among immigrants with Turkish and Moroccan backgrounds than with Antillean, Surinamese, and Indonesian origins. Nonetheless, cultural adoption was more strongly and positively related to satisfaction among immigrants with Antillean, Surinamese, and Indonesian origins compared to people with Turkish and Moroccan backgrounds. Cultural maintenance was more salient than cultural adoption in relation to satisfaction.

**Theoretical Considerations**

In the above section, my main goal was to present the key findings of the thesis in relation to group similarities and differences as well as the relationships between couple-related aspects (and acculturation-related aspects in certain instances). But how we understand and explain these findings require more elaborative focus on cultural value dimensions as well as the theory of psychological acculturation.

**Cultural value dimensions: Can we attribute everything to individualism collectivism?** One of the most prominent dimensions in cross-cultural psychology while understanding group differences and similarities has been individualism-collectivism (Hofstede, 1991; Triandis, 1995). Members of individualistic cultures are more self-oriented, autonomy is salient, people in these cultures mostly give priority to themselves; personal needs, desires, and goals are vital (Triandis, 1995; Lucas et al., 2008), whereas members of the collectivistic cultures are more in-group oriented, harmony, and cohesion are more salient (Triandis, 1995; Lucas et al., 2008). If we relate these differences to couple relationships, couples in individualistic cultures are believed to emphasize emotional sharing and autonomy more as well as the needs and desires of the couple per se, they are believed to be more expressive and direct. On the other hand, couples in collectivistic cultures give presumably more priority to protecting the harmony and cohesion within the family with a greater emphasis on extended family. Family structure (i.e., nuclear and extended) and function (e.g., sharing, communication, and contact) have also been linked to individualism-collectivism (Triandis, 1995) and affluence (Georgas, Berry, van de Vijver, Kagitcibasi, & Poortinga, 2006).

In the present study, we included a supposedly more Western, individualistic, and affluent county; the Netherlands and more non-Western, collectivistic, and less affluent country, Turkey. We focused on the differences and similarities among couples from these two groups. Every difference found can be attributed to distinct value orientations among these two groups. Previous studies have commonly used a similar line of reasoning and anticipations (e.g., Madathil & Benshoff, 2008). There are two important questions that need to be raised in order to accurately reach this conclusion. Firstly, if couples in Turkey are more collectivistic and couples in the Netherlands are more individualistic, then we expect these differences to reflect in couple-relationships and we anticipate differences in all the dynamics in relation to couple relationships. Was it the case in this dissertation? The shortest answer is “No”. Patterns among the groups were not consistent; we did not find consistent differences. Therefore, we cannot conclude that couple relationships in Turkey reflect characteristics of the collectivism and couple relationships in the Netherlands show aspects of individualism. However, we did not find consistent similarities either (see Table 7.1 for details).

Three general conclusions emerge: (1) Differences among the groups were mostly obtained for the multivariate effects and they disappeared while focusing on the univariate effects. (2)

Similarities highlight common underlying factors that exist in different ethnic/cultural groups. In other words, we can talk about certain "universal" and "culture-specifics". Results of this thesis (by using a universalist approach) are in line with the findings of Georgas and colleagues regarding the families across 30 nations (Georgas et al., 2006). Regardless of the culture (nation), there is a nuclear family structure and across all groups, there are weaker emotional bonds between the extended family members than the members of the nuclear family. However, extended family function differs across groups; the role of extended family is more salient in non-Western cultures. (3) On a final note, power distance may be as salient as (or even more salient than) individualism-collectivism in the study of couple relationships in Turkey and the Netherlands. Male dominance, inequality, and female submissiveness were found to shed light to perceived occurrence of negative partner behaviors in *Chapter 5*.

**Psychological acculturation: Is it all about the domain?** The Netherlands is a multicultural society with several ethnic groups such as ethnic Dutch and individuals with Western and non-Western backgrounds. The largest immigrant groups with non-Western origins (Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese, and Antillean, respectively) as well as the largest immigrant groups with Western backgrounds (Indonesian and South African) were included in different studies (Statistics Netherlands, 2012).

In the present thesis, we focused on the role of psychological acculturation which refers to various processes after migration. We focused on psychological acculturation as a process with antecedents (i.e., perceived discrimination), mediators (i.e., cultural maintenance and adoption, ethnic and mainstream identity), and outcomes (i.e., sociocultural competence in the ethnic and mainstream culture, well-being). The main conclusions of the dissertation in relation to acculturation are: (1) Turkish-Dutch immigrants in the Netherlands maintain their ethnic culture in relation to couple-dynamics (*Chapter 2 and 3*; in line with previous studies; Arends-Toth & van de Vijver, 2008). (2) Immigrants with a Western origin are more similar to mainstream Dutch than immigrants with a non-Western origin regarding the couple-dynamics (*Chapter 4 and 5*). (3) Main differences between immigrants with a Western and non-Western origins involve mainstream identity, satisfaction (former being higher than the latter), and perceived discrimination (latter being higher than the former) (*Chapter 4*). (4) The largest differences are between the mainstream Dutch and individuals with Turkish and Moroccan backgrounds in conflict resolution (*Chapter 6*).

All these similarities and differences among ethnic groups in the Netherlands underline three issues: Firstly, psychological acculturation takes time and immigrants with a non-Western origin mostly prefer to maintain their heritage culture in the private domain. Secondly, ethnic group differences and similarities are in line with the perceived cultural distance between the groups (Schalk-Soekar, van de Vijver, & Hoogsteder, 2004) as well as the migration history of the ethnic groups; the main differences in couple- related dynamics

are mostly among groups that perceive the largest distance to the ethnic Dutch (e.g, Turkish-Dutch);the more they perceive distance the more their preference for maintaining their ethnic culture becomes salient for satisfaction. Finally, acculturation dimensions of the dyads are relatively similar, which underlines the importance of couples' using each other to cope with acculturative stress which presumably increases the preference of cultural maintenance (Ait Ouarasse & van de Vijver, 2004).

**Antecedents, mediators, and outcomes: What could affect the relationships?** Another aspect was to disentangle the predictors of outcome variables (e.g., life satisfaction). We followed a distal to proximal line of reasoning similar to previous research (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Our paths in different chapters followed the order of antecedents predicting mediators (e.g., *Chapter 4 and 5*) which then affect the outcomes. The main interest was to examine whether these relationships occur similarly among ethnic groups. If they did, what were the strongest relationships? If they did not show similar patterns across groups, then which relationships were more salient in which groups and what do they mean?

Firstly, in *Chapter 4*, we found that attitudes in marriages are more salient than norms across ethnic groups in the Netherlands; the former involves preferences regarding the couple relationship, whereas the latter is how the couples or couple relationships "should be". Furthermore, among all groups with an immigration background, ethnic identity and perceived discrimination were more strongly associated with couple-related aspects than mainstream identity. In *Chapter 5*, the occurrence to evaluation to satisfaction link was also similar across the ethnic groups in the Netherlands and in this study we identified positive partner behaviors (both occurrence and evaluation) to be stronger than negative behaviors regarding outcomes (satisfaction). In both studies, relationship satisfaction was the strongest predictor of life satisfaction. While referring to the salience of certain relationships in one group than the other, both *Chapter 3* and *Chapter 6* provide details. In *Chapter 3*, it was concluded that actor effects are more salient than partner effects but also actor effects are not invariant across Turkish, Turkish-Dutch, and Dutch couples whereas partner effects are. While referring to the outcomes (i.e., satisfaction and dissatisfaction), the predictive role of happiness with and values of security and sharing as well as conflict were stronger among the Turkish-Dutch couples than Turkish and Dutch couples. Finally, in *Chapter 6*, cultural maintenance was more salient while predicting satisfaction among the Turkish-and-Moroccan-Dutch group and cultural adoption was more salient in relation to satisfaction among the people with Antillean, Surinamese, and Indonesian origins. All these results support the need to examine the validity of associations between various couple-related dynamics and as well as the in(variance) of the relationships between couple-related and acculturation-related dynamics.

**Background variables: What and how to assess?** In different chapters, we assessed different aspects of couple-relationships as well as several dimensions of psychological acculturation. While doing so, numerous methodologies have been used. Themes derived from the interviews were used as the basis for qualitative analysis in *Chapter 2*, partner interdependency was assessed in *Chapter 3*, online diaries were used in *Chapter 5* all of which are believed to help to generalize the findings and increase the ecological validity (for details of various methodologies and analyses in cross-cultural research, see van de Vijver & Leung, 1997). In addition to the methodological aspects, another important point to mention is the importance of background variables in relation to couple relationships. More specifically, if we find ethnic group similarities while controlling for certain background variables, can we lend credibility to the absence of any ethnic group differences in the couple- related dynamics? It should be noted that once we controlled for certain background (confounding) variables (e.g., age, education, income, number of children), some of the ethnic group differences disappeared. There are numerous examples in cross-cultural psychology in which significant differences in means became much smaller or even vanished after controlling for relevant background variables (e.g., Arends-Toth & van de Vijver, 2008; Poortinga & van de Vijver, 1997). These findings suggest that the groups that were sampled in the dissertation may differ in target-relevant background characteristics and that mean differences cannot be taken at face value.

A final point regarding the assessment is the co-existence of seemingly opposite variables. For instance, in this study we once again confirmed the bidimensional structure of acculturation orientations and concluded that cultural maintenance and adoption co-exist (Berry, 1992) and they do not necessarily mirror each other (*Chapter 3* and *6*). Similarly, we found that marital satisfaction and dissatisfaction do not mirror each other and ethnic groups may be similar on one whilst different on the other (*Chapter 3*).



**Implications**

This thesis includes five empirical studies in which I focused on distinct aspects of couple relationships and the role of culture and acculturation in relation to couple relationships among several ethnic/cultural groups (e.g., Turkish, Turkish-Dutch, and Dutch). One of the key objectives was to draw a comprehensive picture which frames similarities, differences, and relationships (if there are any) among the groups.

So, what are the implications of this thesis? I think this dissertation contributes to the field in two ways: theoretical and practical. On the theoretical level, to my knowledge it is one of the first attempts to combine several aspects of couple relationships (e.g., positive and negative characteristics, roles, satisfaction, values, norms) among several groups with supposedly distinct relationship formation and development patterns (e.g., couple and family initiated) at several levels (e.g., including dyads as well as focusing on attitudes and

behaviors) by using several methodologies (e.g., APIM, latent growth curve modeling). Another point to emphasize is the ethnic groups we included in the study: we did not only focus on ethnic groups in the Netherlands (e.g., Turkish-Dutch) and examine similarities and differences between them and ethnic Dutch, but also concentrated on the country of origin (e.g., Turkey). Furthermore, we obtained data from most ethnic groups in the Netherlands (e.g., ethnic Dutch, Turkish-Dutch, Moroccan-Dutch, and Indonesian-Dutch). What do these results tell us, or how do they contribute? I think that the main point is: If we focus on differences and similarities across ethnic groups with respect to couple relationships, nothing is "all similar" or "all different". In light of the universalist approach, there are certain culture-specifics (e.g., negative behavior more frequently occurred among immigrants with a non-Western origin than with a Western origin and ethnic Dutch) as well as certain universals (e.g., sense of sharing). Therefore, this dissertation confirmed the necessity of using a multifaceted approach in couple relationships; cultural value dimensions *per se* (i.e., individualism-collectivism, power distance) may be valuable in understanding differences. However methodological considerations (e.g., method, response bias) and socioeconomic aspects (e.g., income, affluence) should be taken into consideration. In a similar vein, positive and negative relationships among couple dynamics (and acculturation dynamics in certain instances) and their variance/invariance among ethnic groups supported the need for a comprehensive approach. It is believed that multiple methodologies used in this thesis strengthen the conclusions we reach by yielding to an elaborative and multidimensional evaluation of couple relationships (Plano-Clark, Huddleston-Casas, Churchill, O'Neil Green, & Garrett, 2008).

In relation to the second contribution, results of this thesis are believed to be able to guide counselors as well as policy makers especially in multicultural societies such as the Netherlands. Couple relationships are complex processes and formation and maintenance of the relationship is believed to have certain culture specifics. Therefore, in light of the results of this thesis, I think it is crucial to draw couple and family counselors' attention to the importance of cultural awareness to values, normative beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors (Madathil & Benshoff, 2008). Moreover, policy makers should bear in mind that acculturation is a complex process and psychological aspects of the migration do not only include the acculturation dynamics hold by the individual but it also includes family members or couples as a whole. Finally, certain groups with an immigration background (e.g., Turkish-Dutch) may have a stronger preference of maintaining their ethnic culture than adopting the mainstream culture regarding the couple relationships; in other words, our results once again supported the need to focus on psychological acculturation from a domain specific point of view (Arends-Toth & van de Vijver, 2008). I think policy makers should consider numerous forms and processes of couple relationships.

**Next Step: Suggestions for Future Research**

So far I emphasized the general findings of this thesis and their novelty as well as contribution. This dissertation should be considered and evaluated as an initial step to move towards more integrative couple relationship studies. I think at this point it is important to name certain recommendations for future researchers which can be considered as both theoretical and methodological.

On the theoretical level, I often referred to cultural value dimensions in the thesis; namely individualism, collectivism, and power distance and how they can be used as possible frameworks to understand relationships among couples in various ethnic groups. However, I did not assess the level of individualism, collectivism, or hierarchy among couples. Therefore, couples living in a presumably collectivistic country; Turkey may not be necessarily reflecting the characteristics of collectivism on the country level and similarly ethnic Dutch couples may not be actually that individualistic. Hence, future studies should assess cultural value orientations on the individual level. Also, I did not have the possibility to make within-country comparisons in Turkey. Previous studies underlined the within-country heterogeneity (e.g., Imamoglu & Yasak, 1997); yet, our sample size did not allow us to focus on different regions in Turkey. In studies focusing on ethnic groups in the Netherlands, it was not possible to separate ethnic groups and concentrate each of them separately with the data obtained; instead, we had to combine the ethnic groups. Furthermore, we could not examine generational differences and similarities; future studies should consider including first and second generation individuals with immigration backgrounds. Another main point is the consideration of relationship arrangements; despite the fact that Turkish couples mostly self identified their relationships as "family initiated" and relationships of the Dutch couples were mainly "initiated by themselves" still we did not solely focus on the role of or associations with relationship arrangements regarding the couple relationships. All these points need caution and next step needs to be the consideration of these aspects while focusing on couple relationships across ethnic groups in order to reach conclusions and make generalizations. On a final note, replicating our studies among intercultural couples (e.g., Turkish husbands and Dutch wives) and including the children's point of view is believed to help researchers to generalize the findings.



**Conclusion**

In conclusion, what is the role of culture/ethnicity in couple relationships or how do dynamics of couple relationships relate to one another across cultures? As discussed in this chapter, there is not a single answer to these questions and this thesis in an attempt to shed light on the possible responses to these questions. So, "You and I" may or may not mean the same across cultures; many factors need to be taken into consideration. In other words, the concluding remark of this dissertation is the need for an integrative couple relationship

approach with the careful consideration of salience of couple-related and acculturation-related dynamics as well as their differential (or similar) meanings.

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# SUMMARY

In this dissertation, there were two key objectives: identifying the role of culture and the role of acculturation in relation to couple relationships. In other words, derived from these two goals, I tried to find answers to four main questions:

1. What could be the similarities and differences regarding several aspects of couple relationships in Turkey and the Netherlands?
2. Are couples with an immigration background more similar to the couples from the ethnic culture or the majority culture?
3. Are couples with a Western immigration background more similar to the couples with a non-Western origin or couples from the majority culture?
4. What are the relationships between couple-related dynamics and between couple-related and acculturation-related dynamics, and do these relationships vary across cultural or ethnic groups?

In order to unravel these questions, five independent empirical studies that included couples from Turkey and the Netherlands were conducted. Two main theoretical frameworks used in cross-cultural psychology were adopted: cultural value dimensions (i.e., individualism-collectivism and power distance) and psychological acculturation (i.e., acculturation conditions, orientations, and outcomes). We thoroughly examined the ethnic group/cross-cultural similarities and differences vis-à-vis numerous positive (e.g., positive partner behaviors, satisfaction) and negative dynamics (e.g., destructive conflict resolution, dissatisfaction) in couple relationships as well as the (in)variance of the relationships among them (e.g., the association between spousal values and satisfaction). Additionally, various dynamics of psychological acculturation (e.g., perceived discrimination, cultural maintenance, and cultural adoption) were studied with a focus on similarities and differences among them across ethnic groups as well as the associations between couple-related and acculturation-related dynamics. The main goal was to create a comprehensive framework derived from empirical data of five studies (Chapter 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6) which concentrates on and integrates multiple ethnic groups (e.g., Turkish-Dutch, Moroccan-Dutch, ethnic Dutch), multiple countries (i.e., Turkey and the Netherlands), multiple dimensions (many couple and acculturation- related aspects) by using multiple methodologies (e.g., focus on dyads and attitudes and behaviors) and employing multiple analytical strategies (e.g., Actor-Partner Interdependence Model, latent growth curve modeling, content analysis).

More specifically, in *Chapter 2* and *3*, in light of cultural value dimensions (i.e., individualism-collectivism) and psychological acculturation theory, we focused on married dyads living in Turkey and in the Netherlands, which included Turkish, Turkish-Dutch (couples with a Turkish immigration background living in the Netherlands), and ethnic Dutch

couples. In *Chapter 2*, we addressed the perceived antecedents of marital satisfaction by conducting semistructured interviews among 49 dyads. Results of the multivariate tests showed differences on positive and negative characteristics of marriages, determinants of general marital satisfaction and dissatisfaction, spousal communication, sources of marital conflict, and marital roles and similarities on the conflict resolution strategies. Yet, when focusing on the univariate analyses, most of the ethnic group differences disappeared; main differences were between the Turkish/Turkish-Dutch (with a stronger emphasis on children and economical issues) and Dutch couples (more emphasis on behavior and personality of the spouse, reciprocity, emotional sharing, and psychological roles). In relation to the role of psychological acculturation, Turkish-Dutch couples were more similar to Turkish than to Dutch couples, which underlined the preference of cultural maintenance in couple relationships.

*Chapter 3* elaborated further on *Chapter 2* by carrying out an in-depth examination of marriage-related aspects and empirically assessing acculturation-related aspects. More specifically, marital dynamics (i.e., happiness with marital aspects, sources of marital conflict, and values) and satisfaction (i.e., marital satisfaction and dissatisfaction) were examined in *Chapter 3.* Turkish, Turkish-Dutch, and Dutch couples (a total of 720 individuals) self-reported their happiness with the sense of security and sharing as well as their perceived spousal values on them, internal and external sources of marital conflict and marital (un) happiness. Furthermore, Turkish-Dutch couples indicated their preferences for both cultural maintenance and cultural adoption, their sociocultural competence in both the ethnic and mainstream culture as well as their overall well-being. Regarding the relationships among marriage-related dynamics by using an Actor-Partner Interdependence model, results revealed that actor effects are more salient than partner effects and that the former is invariant, whereas the latter varies among ethnic groups. Furthermore, happiness with and values on the sense of security and dissatisfaction were higher among the Turkish and Turkish-Dutch couples than Dutch couples. Like in *Chapter 2*, using this different data analytic perspective, here too cultural maintenance was more strongly related to marriage-related aspects than cultural adoption among the Turkish-Dutch couples.

*Chapter 4, 5,* and *6* examined predictors of satisfaction and addressed the (in)variance of these relationships across the main ethnic groups in the Netherlands. In *Chapter 4*, distal (spousal normative beliefs and attitudes) and proximal (marital satisfaction) predictors of life satisfaction were studied among mainstream Dutch and immigrants with a Western and non-Western background (a total of 974 individuals). Likewise, acculturation conditions (i.e., perceived discrimination), orientations (i.e., ethnic and mainstream identity), and their relation to couple dynamics (i.e., normative beliefs, attitudes, and satisfaction) were examined among people with an immigration background. Regarding the relationships, we found that there was a distal to proximal effect on life satisfaction. More specifically, marital

satisfaction mediated the relationship between harmonious spousal normative beliefs and attitudes and life satisfaction in a similar manner in all groups. The effect of attitudes was stronger than normative beliefs. Among groups with an immigration background, ethnic identity and perceived discrimination positively influenced traditional beliefs. In addition to this, ethnic identity positively predicted traditional attitudes and negatively predicted harmonious attitudes. Harmonious attitudes positively predicted marital satisfaction, which, in turn, positively influenced life satisfaction. As a further goal, we identified the similarities and differences among all groups for each following aspect: traditional spousal attitudes, marital satisfaction, and mainstream identity. When we controlled for age, number of children, and education, we found that mainstream Dutch and immigrants with a Western background were lower on traditional spousal beliefs and attitudes, and higher on harmonious spousal attitudes than immigrants with a non-Western origin. Among the immigrant groups (while controlling for generational status, age, education, and number of children), marital satisfaction and mainstream identity were emphasized more and perceived discrimination was emphasized less by immigrants with a Western background as compared to immigrants with a non-Western background.

Using culture value dimensions (individualism-collectivism, power distance, and self-expression—survival) and emotional expressiveness as frameworks and addressing behaviors in addition to the attitudes, *Chapter 5* added to the previous chapters by studying both the frequency and evaluation of positive and negative partner behaviors as perceived by the participants. A total of 352 people who identified themselves as ethnic Dutch and people with a Western and non-Western immigration backgrounds participated in this study. We used a longitudinal perspective this time. In other words, our main focus was the differences and similarities on partner behaviors (both occurrence and evaluation) and satisfaction (relationship and life satisfaction), as well as the relationships between partners among ethnic groups in the Netherlands. Moreover, the stability and change in partner behaviors were analyzed by asking participants to complete online diaries for 28 days and to indicate the occurrence and evaluation of positive and negative behaviors. We found ethnic group similarities on the evaluation of partner behaviors and satisfaction and differences were obtained for the occurrence of partner behaviors among the groups (we controlled for the effects of age, education, and number of children). However, the only significant difference was on the perceived occurrence of negative partner behavior as immigrants with a non-Western origin scored higher than both mainstream Dutch and immigrants with a Western origin. In addition to the similarities and differences among ethnic groups, like in the previous studies, predictors of satisfaction (i.e., relationship and life satisfaction) were also examined here. Occurrence of the behaviors significantly predicted their evaluations, which in turn affected satisfaction (except the influence of the evaluation of negative behaviors on relationship satisfaction) and this relationship was similar across the groups.

However, positive behaviors were more salient than the negative behaviors and the strongest relationships were between relationship and life satisfaction. Regarding the stability and change, there was a decrease in the occurrence of negative behaviors from Week 1 to Week 4 and an increase in the positive evaluation of positive behaviors Week 1 to Week 4.

In the last empirical chapter, *Chapter 6*, we aimed at disentangling the role of ethnicity as well as acculturation in relation to destructive conflict resolution and relationship satisfaction among 600 individuals who identified themselves as ethnic Dutch, and immigrants with Turkish, Moroccan, Antillean, Surinamese, and Indonesian origins, all of them living in the Netherlands. Ethnic group differences were obtained for destructive conflict resolution and there were similarities for relationship satisfaction once we controlled for age, education, and income. In relation to the specific differences across the groups, the Turkish-Moroccan group was higher on destructive conflict management (i.e., hitting, pushing, slapping, leaving the argument to the partner, and continuing the argument without listening to the partner) than the ethnic Dutch group. The Turkish-Moroccan group also indicated that they continue the argument without listening to their partners more than the Antillean-Surinamese group. Regarding relationship satisfaction, immigrants with an Indonesian background indicated more happiness with their relationship compared to Turkish-Moroccan immigrants. We also focused on the gender differences and similarities and found that females scored higher than males in relation to destructive conflict management (except leaving the argument to the partner) and relationship satisfaction (but in this case only for the happiness with the relationship with children). As the final goal, relationships were analyzed and groups were invariant in relation to the negative relationship between destructive conflict resolution and relationship satisfaction. Yet, cultural maintenance was more strongly and positively related to satisfaction among immigrants with Turkish and Moroccan backgrounds than with Antillean, Surinamese, and Indonesian origins. Nevertheless, cultural adoption was more strongly and positively related to satisfaction among immigrants with Antillean, Surinamese, and Indonesian origins compared to people with Turkish and Moroccan backgrounds. Cultural maintenance was more salient than cultural adoption in relation to satisfaction.

To sum up, the general conclusions of the thesis are: (1) Ethnic group similarities and differences co-exist and multivariate (overall) differences are larger than univariate (specific) differences. (2) Once we control for certain background variables, most of the ethnic group differences disappear. (3) Participants with a non-Western immigration background (e.g., Turkish-Dutch) prefer to maintain their ethnic culture than adopting the mainstream culture in relation to couple relationships. (4) Participants with a Western immigration background (e.g., Indonesian-Dutch) are more similar to the ethnic Dutch than participants with a non-Western immigration background. (5) Associations among couple-related as well as acculturation-related dynamics are quite similar across the ethnic groups; however, partner effects (e.g., the relationship between wives' conflict and husbands' dissatisfaction) and the

association between acculturation orientations and satisfaction (e.g., salience of cultural maintenance in relation to satisfaction among the Turkish-Moroccan group) vary among groups.

Findings of the thesis are discussed in light of the "universalist" approach with a support for certain universals as well as culture-specifics. In other words, it is concluded that cultural value theories (i.e., individualism-collectivism, power distance, and self-expression-survival) are important and crucial in relation to understanding differences among ethnic/cultural groups; yet, socioeconomic factors and methodological aspects need to be addressed in order to have a detailed and an ample perspective to couple relationships. Similarly, psychological acculturation with its antecedents, mediators, and outcomes should be taken into consideration and similarities and differences per se as well as the associations between them and couple-related dynamics need to be examined meticulously, especially in multicultural societies such as the Netherlands. In summary, this thesis is believed to shed light and contribute to the understudied area of couple relationships as linked to culture, both on the theoretical and practical level. Not only theoretical researchers may find useful the aforementioned results, but also counselors and policy makers will be aware of the need to study couple relationships in Turkey and the Netherlands from a multifaceted perspective and may apply the findings revealed along the five empirical studies, which pertains to several relational situations and factors: similarities as well as differences in couple relationships, their salience and (in)variability among associations between them, the role of acculturation dynamics, and the link between them and couple-related dynamics altogether underline the importance of taking couple relationships as the integration of several aspects mainly including culture, acculturation, and socioeconomic factors.

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